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THE WORLDS OF MONTY WILLSON

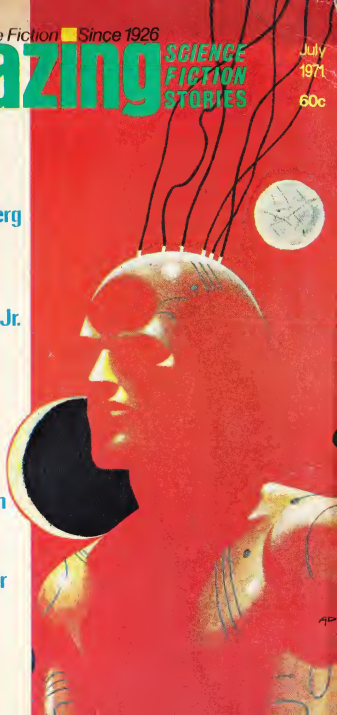
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JULY, 1971 Vol. 45, No. 2

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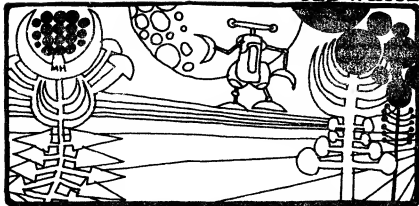
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EDITORIAL

The other day, as I was browsing my local newsstand, I performed what is by now for me a habitual task, and pulled the sf magazines out from behind the non-sf digest-sized magazines. It was the top shelf of the middle tier of display shelves, which means, unfortunately, the shelf which is visible to a grown man only when he stoops, recessed back out of sight. There was one copy of the March issue of *AMAZING*—the only one the distributor, in his infinite wisdom, had shipped to the store—and it was hurried behind four copies of something called *Success*.

The cover of *Success* caught my eye: a photograph of a display of sex magazines, topped by a line which read, "Smut Alley: Coming to Your Town Soon?"

Curious to know how this subject featured in a magazine which is supposedly devoted to becoming a financial success—would they tell how you, in your spare time could make millions by "peddling smut?"—I thumbed through the copy.

It was typical stuff: in the guise of preaching against pornography, the magazine was publishing it—in full color photos of what the blurbs said were displays visible to the public on New York's 42nd Street.

A quick scan of the article itself was enough to establish that it was rabidly anti-pornography, and apparently motivated by the report of the President's Commission on Pornography. The relevancy of the piece in a magazine called *Success* was dubious, but I gather that the publisher of the magazine is strongly opposed to both pornography and the Commission's report. And, I would guess, it was his assumption that all right-minded Americans—the ones who would buy a magazine called *Success* in the first place—would agree with him.

The reasoning was this: people have either what the magazine termed Positive Mental Attitudes or Negative Mental Attitudes. It appears that the publisher of *Success* made his fortune with a Positive Mental Attitude, and is trying to pass his amazing secret to wealth and happiness along to us. In regard to pornography, it was stated that for people with a Positive Mental Attitude, pornography is disgusting and loathsome. Those of us who are less fortunate and possess Negative Mental Attitudes, are interested in—perhaps even aroused by—and see nothing wrong with pornography. And clearly, the President's Commission on Pornography was

dominated by doomed souls of the latter sort.

I won't dignify such abysmal logic with a rebuttal, but I note it here as an example of the ignorance to which the President himself pandered in condemning the report of the Commission unread and out of hand. It is the attitude of people who Know What Is Right and won't allow the intrusion of facts to change their minds. Personally, it strikes me as more Negative than Positive, but that may be my own bias showing.

("There are two kinds of people in this world," a friend of mine who dabbles in psychology on the side once said. "The kind of people who believe there are only two kinds of people in the world—and those who don't.")

Those of us who write (or edit) for a living have been enormously encouraged by the changes over the last ten years which have led to greater freedom for writers. The court decisions which freed D.H. Lawrence, Henry Miller and John Cleland from the prison of censorship were signal movements in the direction of a more mature society in which the individual was at last allowed to decide for himself what he wished to read—or write. Subsequent court decisions have affirmed the rights of adults to own pornography, and, most recently, struck down the rights of the Postal officials to censor the mails. These decisions are not important because they have, in effect, legalized pornography. They are important because they have restored to us, the citizens of this country, the right to make our own decisions, and determine our own pleasures. They are a step towards genuine democracy and away from Government attempts to control our minds.

The President's Commission stated outright that no observable harm comes from pornography, and that in some cases it is beneficial. All available facts support this statement, and the only arguments against it I've heard are from those who simply refuse to believe it. Sexuality is sinful to these

people, and although they may, in the secret recesses of their minds, treasure their own sexual responses, they know it is "dirty" and they deny others the right to more open enjoyment. That, as it happens, is *their* problem.

The pornography boom which has flourished in the wake of recent court decisions appears to upset the *Success* people, but they ought to take heart in the findings of the Commission that in Denmark, where pornography is openly legal, sales to Danes are sharply waning and only the tourists are buying. A friend of mine who cranks out pornographic novels with amazing rapidity tells me that the same thing is beginning to happen here. "You can sell only so many badly written books full of cliché pornography for a buck-ninety-five and up," he says. "We've broken down all the taboos, one by one, and there just isn't anything more daring left. There's no way out except better writing."

It should have been obvious. Pornography has flourished as a cultural underground for decades, and its main appeals were curiosity and the lure of forbidden fruit. When I was in high school the first written pornography I saw was a mimeographed pamphlet (rather like a fanzine) which had been handled so much that it was falling apart along the seams where it had been folded. Even then I was aware that the anatomic feats described (such as the female ejaculation of copious fluids) were biologically impossible, and that the writing was hopelessly bad; the work of a subliterate, in fact. But, as the first work of pornography I'd ever seen, it certainly excited me—as well as the rest of the boys who furtively passed it around during school that afternoon. Later, an older boy offered to sell me for \$5.00, a deck of cards on which various females were posed pruriently. In that pre-*Playboy* era, such photographs were my first hint of the realities of female anatomy, and I bought them

(Continued on page 128)

Two minds warred for the single body where only one should have been—while the girl, cursed with the gift of telepathy no one could want, could only watch and wait for a victor...

THE SECOND TRIP

ROBERT SILVERBERG

Illustrated by MICHAEL WM. Kaluta
(First of Two Parts)

ONE

EVEN THE STREET felt wrong beneath his feet. Something oddly rubbery about the pavement, too much give in it. As though they had changed the mix of the concrete during the four years of his troubles. A new futuristic stuff, the 2011-model sidewalk, bouncy and weird. But no. The sidewalk looked the same. *He* was the new stuff. As though, when they had altered him, they had altered his stride too, changing the swing of his knees, changing the pivot of his hips. Now he wasn't sure of his movements. He didn't know whether he was supposed to hit the pavement with his heel or his toe. Every step was an adventure in discovery. He felt clumsy and uncertain within his own body.

Or *was* it his own? How far did the Rehab people go, anyway, in reconstructing your existence? Maybe a total brain transplant. Scoop out the old gray mass, run a jolt of juice through it, stick it into a waiting new body. And put somebody else's rehabilitated brain in

your vacated skull? The old wine in a new decanter. No. No. That isn't how they work at all. This is the body I was born with. I'm having a little difficulty in coordination, true, but that's only to be expected. The first day out on the street again. Tuesday the something of May, 2011. Clear blue sky over the towers of Manhattan North. So I'm a little clumsy at first. So? So? Didn't they say something like this would happen?

Easy, now. Get a grip. Can't you remember how you used to walk? Just be natural.

Step. Step. Step. Into the rhythm of it. Heel and toe, heel and toe. Step. *Step.* That's the way! One-and-two-and-*one*-and-two-and-*one*-and-two. This is how Paul Macy walks. Proudly down the goddamn street. Shoulders square. Belly sucked in. Thirty-nine years old. Prime of life. Strong as an—what did they say, strong as an ox? Yes. Ox. Ox. Opportunity beckons you. A second trip, a second start. The bad dream is over; now you're awake. Step. Step. What about your arms? Let them

swing? Hands in pockets? Don't worry about that, just go on walking. Let the arms look after themselves. You'll get the hang of it. You're out on the street, you're free, you've been rehabilitated. On your way to pick up your job assignment. Your new career. Your new life. Step. Step.

One-and-two-and-one-and-two.

He couldn't avoid the feeling that everybody was looking at him. That was probably normal too, the little touch of paranoia. After all, he had the Rehab badge in his lapel, the glittering bit of yellow metal advertising his status as a reconstruct job. The image of the new shoots rising from the old stump, warning everybody who had known him in the old days to be tactful. No one was supposed to greet him by his former name. No one was supposed to acknowledge the existence of his past. The Rehab badge was intended as a mercy, as a protection against the prodding of absent memories. But of course it attracted attention too. People looked at him—absolute strangers, so far as he knew, though he couldn't be sure—people looked and wondered, who is this guy, what did he do that got him sentenced to Rehab? The triple ax murderer. Raped a nine-year-old with pinking shears. Embezzled ten million. Poisoned six old ladies for their heirlooms. Dynamited the Chartres Cathedral. All those eyes on him, speculating. Imagining his sins. The badge warned them he was something special.

There was no place to hide from those eyes. Macy moved all the way over to the curb and walked just along the edge. Right inside the strip of gleaming red metal ribbon that was embedded in the pavement, the stuff



WILLIAMS
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that flashed the magnetic pulses that kept autos from going out of control and jumping up on the sidewalk. It was no good here either. He imagined that the drivers zipping by were leaning out to stare at him. Crossing the pavement on an inward diagonal, he found another route for himself hugging the sides of buildings. That's right, Macy, skulk along. Keep one shoulder higher than the other and try to fool yourself into thinking that it shields your face. Hunch your head. Jack the Ripper out for a stroll. Nobody's looking at you. This is New York, remember? You could walk down the street with your dong out of your pants and who'd notice? Not here. This city is full of Rehabs. Why should anybody care about you and your sordid eradicated past? Cut the paranoia, Paul.

Paul.

That was a hard part too. The new name. *I am Paul Macy*. A sweet compact name. Who dreamed that one up? Is there a computer down in the guts of the earth that fits syllables together and makes up new names for the Rehab boys? *Paul Macy*. Not bad. They could have told me I was Dragomir Slivovitz. Izzy Levine. Leroy Rastus Williams. But instead they came up with Paul Macy. I suppose for the holovision job. You need a name like that for the networks. "*Good evening, this is Dragomir Slivovitz, bringing you the eleven o'clock news. Speaking from his weekend retreat at the Lunar White House, the President declared—*" No. They had coined the right kind of name for his new career. Very fucking Anglo-Saxon.

Suddenly he felt a great need to see the face he was wearing. He couldn't remember what he looked like. Com-

ing to an abrupt stop, he turned to his left and picked his reflection off the mirror-bright plaster beside an office building's entrance. He caught the image of a wide-cheeked, thin-lipped, standard sort of Anglo-Saxon face, with a big chin and a lot of soft windblown yellow-brown hair and deep-set pale blue eyes. No beard, no mustache. The face seemed strong, a little bland, decently proportioned, and wholly unfamiliar. He was surprised to see how relaxed he looked: no tension-lines in the forehead, no scowl, no harshness of the eyes. Macy absorbed all this in a fraction of a second; then whoever had been walking behind him, caught short by his sudden halt, crashed into his side and shoulder. He whirled. A girl. His hand went quickly to her elbow, steadying her. More her fault than his: she ought to look where she's going. Yet he felt guilty. "I'm terribly sor—"

"Nat," she said. "Nat Hamlin, for God's sake!"

Someone was slipping a long cold needle into his eye. Under the lid, very very delicately done, up and up and around the top of the eyeball, past the tangled ropes of the nerves, and on into his brain. The needle had some sort of extension; it seemed to expand telescopically, sliding through the wrinkled furrowed folded mass of soft tissue, skewering him from forehead to skullcap. A tiny blaze of sparkling light wherever the tip of the needle touched. Ah, so, ve cut out dis, und den ve isolate dis, and ve chop here a little, ja, ja, ist gut! And the pain. Oh, Christ. the pain, the pain, the pain, the fire running down every neuron and jumping every synapse, the pain! Like hav-

ing a thousand teeth pulled all at once. They said it absolutely wouldn't hurt at all. Those lying fuckers.

They had taught him how to handle a situation like this. He had to be polite but firm. Politely but firmly he said, "I'm sorry, but you're mistaken. My name's Paul Macy."

The girl had recovered from the shock of their collision. She took a couple of steps back and studied him carefully. He and she now constituted an encapsulated pocket of stasis on the busy sidewalk; people were flowing smoothly around them. She was tall and slender, with long straight red hair, troubled green eyes, fine features. A light dusting of freckles on the bridge of her nose. Full lips. No makeup. She wore a scruffy blue checked spring coat. She looked as if she hadn't been sleeping well lately. He guessed she was in her late twenties. Very pale. Attractive in a tired, frayed way. She said, "Don't play around with me. I know you're Nat Hamlin. You're looking good, Nat."

Each time she said the name he felt the needles wiggle behind his eyeballs.

"Macy. Paul Macy."

"I don't like this game. It's a cruel one, Nat. Where have you been? What is it, five years?"

"Won't you please try to understand?" he asked. He glanced meaningfully at his Rehab badge. Her eyes didn't follow him.

"I understand that you're trying to hurt me, Nat. It wouldn't be the first time."

"I don't know you at all, miss."

"You don't know me at all. You don't know me at all."

"I don't know you at all. Right."

"Lissa Moore."

"I'm sorry."

"What kind of trip are you on, Nat?"

"My second one," Macy said.

"Your—second—one?"

He touched the badge. This time she saw it.

"Rehab?" she said. Blinking a couple of times: obviously adjusting her frame of reference. Color in her cheeks now. Biting her lip, abashed.

He nodded. "I've just come out. Now do you understand? I don't know you. I never did."

"Christ," she said. "We had such good times, Nat."

"Paul."

"How can I call you that?"

"It's my name now."

"We had such good times," she said. "Before you went away. Before I came apart. I'm not working much now, you know. It's been pretty bad."

"I'm sorry," he told her, shifting his weight uneasily. "It really isn't good for me to spend much time with people from my first trip. Or any time at all with them, actually."

"You don't want to go somewhere and talk?"

"I can't. I mustn't."

"Maybe some other time?" she asked. "When you're a little more accustomed to things?"

"I'm afraid not," he said. Firmly but politely. "The whole point is that I've made a total break with the past, and I mustn't try to repair that break, or let anyone repair it for me. I'm on an entirely new trip now, can you see that?"

"I can see it," she murmured, "but I don't want it. I'm having a lot of trouble these days, and you can help me, Nat. If only—"

"Paul. And I'm not in any shape for helping anybody. I can barely help myself. Look at how my hand is shaking."

"And you've started to sweat. Your forehead's all wet."

"There's a tremendous strain. I'm conditioned to keep away from people out of the past."

"It kills me when you say that. *People out of the past*. Like a guillotine coming down. You loved me. And I loved you. Love. Still. Love. So when you say—"

"Please."

"You, please." She was trembling, hanging on to his sleeve. Her eyes, going glassy, flitted and flickered a thousand times a second. "Let's go somewhere for a drink, for a smoke, for a talk. I realize about the Rehab thing, but I need you too much. Please. Please."

"I can't."

"Please." And she leaned toward him, her fingertips clutching hard into the bones of his right wrist, and he felt a baffling sensation in the top of his skull. A sort of intrusion. A tickling. A mild glow of heat. Along with it came a disturbing blurring of identity, a doubling of self, so that for a moment he was knocked free of his moorings. Paul Hamlin. Nat Macy. In the core of his mind erupted a vivid scene in garish colors: himself crouched over some sort of keyboard, and this girl standing naked on the far side of a cluttered room with her hands pressed to her cheeks. *Scream*, he was saying. *Go on, Lissa, scream. Give us a good one*. The image faded. He was back on a street in Manhattan North, but he was having trouble seeing, everything out of focus and getting more

bleary each second. His legs were wobbly. A spike of pain under his breastbone. Maybe a heart attack, even. "Please," the girl was saying. "Don't turn me away, Nat. Nat, what's happening? Your face is so red!"

"The conditioning—" he said, gasping.

The pressure eased. The girl backed away from him, touching the tips of her knuckles to her lips. As the distance between them increased he felt better. He clung to the side of the building with one hand and made a little shooing gesture at her with the other. Go on. Away. Out of my life. Whoever you were, there's no room now. She nodded. She continued to back away. He had a last brief glimpse of her tense, puffy-eyed face, and then she was cut off from him by a stream of people. Is this what it's going to be like every time I meet somebody from the old days? But maybe the others won't be like that. They'll respect my badge and pass silently on. Give me a chance to rebuild. It's only fair. She wasn't being fair. Neurotic bitch, putting her troubles above mine. Help me, she kept saying. Please. Please, Nat. As if I could help anybody.

Twenty minutes later he arrived at the network office. Ten minutes overdue, but that was unavoidable. He had needed some time to recover after the encounter with the girl on the street. Let the adrenalin drain out of the system, let the sweat dry. It was important for him to present an unruffled exterior; more important, in fact, than showing up on time the first day. The network people were probably prepared to be tolerant of a little unpunctuality at first, considering all that he

had been through. But he had to demonstrate that he had the professional qualities the job demanded. They were hiring him as an act of grace, yes, but it wasn't pure charity: he wouldn't have been accepted if he hadn't been suitable for the job. So he needed to show that he had the surface slickness, the smoothness, that a holovision commentator had to have. Pause to catch the breath. Get the hair tidy. Adjust the collar. Give yourself that seamless, sprayed-on look. You had a nasty shock or two in the street, but now you're feeling much better. All right. Now go in. A confident stride. One-and-two-and-one-and-two.

The lobby was dark and cavernous. Screens everywhere, a hundred sensors mounted in the onyx walls, anti-vandal robots poised with bland impersonality to come rolling forth if anybody tried anything troublesome. Standing beneath the security panel Macy activated one of the screens and a cheery female face appeared. Just a hint of plump bare breasts at the bottom of the screen, cut off by the prudish camera angle. "I have an appointment," he said. "Paul Macy. To see Mr. Bercovici."

"Certainly, Mr. Macy. The liftshaft to your right. Thirty-eighth floor."

He stepped into the shaft. It was already programmed; serenely he floated skyward. At the top, another screen. Face of an elegant haggard black girl, shaven eyebrows, gleaming cheekbones, no flesh to spare. The sort of gorgeous halo of shimmering hair you'd expect. "Please step through Access Green," she said. A throaty, throbbing contralto. "Mr. Fredericks is expecting you in Gallery Nine of the Rotunda."

"My appointment is with Mr. Bercovici—"

Too late. Screen dead. Access Green, an immense oval doorway the color of a rhododendron leaf, was opening from a central sphincter, like the iris of a shutter of an antique camera. Abandon all hope, ye who enter here. Macy stepped hastily through, worrying about having the sphincter reverse itself when he had one leg on each side. Beyond the doorway the air was soft and clammy, heavy with a rain-forest warmth and humidity, and mysterious fragrances were adrift. He saw low, dim passages radiating in a dozen directions. The walls were pink and rounded, no corners anywhere, and seemed to be made of some spongy resilient substance. The whole place was like one vast womb. Trapped in the fallopian tubes. Macy tried to persuade himself not to start sweating again. There was a popping sound, of the sort one could make by pushing a fingertip against the inside of one's cheek and sliding it swiftly out of one's mouth, and the black girl emerged from a gash in the wall that promptly resealed itself. She was sealed too, encased in purple plastic from throat to toes, like a chrysalis, everything covered but nothing concealed: her tight wrap startlingly displayed the outlines of her bony body. Superb skeletal structure. She said, "I'm Loftus. I'll show you to Mr. Fredericks' office."

"Mr. Bercovici—"

She didn't wait. Hurrying down the hall, legs going like pistons, bare feet hitting the spongy floor thwunk thwunk thwunk. Trim flat rump: no buttocks at all, so far as he could tell, merely a termination, like a cat's hindquarters. He was upset. Bercovici was the one

who had interviewed him at the Rehab Center, all smiles and sincerity, thinning blond hair, pudgy cheeks. Don't worry, Mr. Macy, I'll be looking after you personally during your difficult transition back to daily life. Bercovici was his lifeline. Without looking back, the black girl called out, "Mr. Bercovici's been transferred to the Addis Ababa office."

"But I spoke to him only ten days ago, Miss Loftus!"

She halted. Momentary blaze of the eyes. "*Loftus* is quite sufficient," she said. Then the expression softened. Perhaps remembering she was dealing with a convalescent. "Sometimes transfers happen rapidly here. But Mr. Fredericks has your full dossier. He's aware of the problems."

Mr. Fredericks had a long cavernous office, rounded and wombly, from the sloping ceiling of which dangled hundreds of soft pink globes, breast-shaped; a tiny light was mounted in each nipple. He was a small dapper man with a moist handshake. Macy received from him a sweet sad embarrassed smile, the kind one gives a man who has had a couple of limbs or perhaps his genitals amputated to check the metastasis of some new lightning cancer. "So glad you've come, Mr. Macy. Paul, may I make it? And call me Stilton. We're all informal here. A wonderful opportunity for you in this organization." Eyes going to Macy's Rehab badge, then away, then back, as though he couldn't refrain from staring at it. The stigmata of healing. "Show you around," Fredericks was saying. "Get to know everybody. The options here are tremendous: the whole world of modern data-intake at your service. We'll start you slowly,

feed you into the news in ninety-second slices, first, then, as you pick up real ease at it, we'll nudge you into the front line." *Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, this is Pavel Nathanielovitch Macy coming to you from the Kremlin on the eve of the long-awaited summit.* The rear wall of Fredericks' office vanished as though it had been annihilated by some wandering mass of antimatter and Macy found himself staring into an immense stupefying abyss, a dark well hundreds of feet across and perhaps infinitely deep. A great many golden specks floated freely in that bowl of nothingness. He was so awestruck by the unexpected sight that he lost a chunk of Fredericks' commentary, but picked up on it in time to hear, "You see, we have thousands, literally thousands of free-ranging hovereye cameras posted in every spot throughout the world where news is likely to break. Their normal altitude is eighty to a hundred feet but of course we can raise or lower them on command. You can think of them simply as passive observers hanging everywhere overhead, little self-contained self-propelled passive observers, sitting up there soaking in a full range of audio and visual information and holding it all on 24-hour tap-scanning drums. Those of us here at Manhattan North Headquarters can tap in on any of these inputs as needed. For instance, if I want to get some idea of what's doing at the Sterility Day parade in Trafalgar Square—" He touched a small blue button in a broad console on his desk, and up out of the darkness one of the golden specks came zooming, halting in midair just beyond the place where the wall of Fredericks' office had been. "What we have here," Fredericks explained,

"is the slave-servo counterpart of the hovereye camera that's hanging above that parade right now. I simply induce an output—here, we get a visual—" Macy saw gesticulating women waving banners and setting off flares. "—and here we get the audio—" Raucous screams, the chanting of slogans. Macy hadn't heard of Sterility Day before. The world becomes terribly strange when you spend four years out of circulation. "—if we want any of this for the next newscast, you see, we just pump the signal into a recorder and set it up for editing—and meanwhile the hovereye is still up there, soaking it all in, relaying on demand—gathering the news is no frigging chore at all when you have ten thousand of these lovely little motherfuckers working for you all over the place—" A nervous giggle. "Sometimes our language gets a little rough around here. You stop noticing it after a while." One doesn't speak crude Anglo-Saxon to a man who wears the badge of his trauma on his lapel, is that it? Fredericks had him by the arm. "Time to meet your new colleagues," he was saying. "I want to fill you in completely. You're going to love it working here." Out of the office. The rear wall mysteriously restoring itself as they leave, the dark well of the hovereyes vanishing once more. Down the humid fallopian passageways. Doors opening. Neat, well-groomed executives everywhere, all of them getting up to greet him. Some of them speaking exceptionally loudly and clearly, as if they thought a man who had had his troubles might find it difficult to understand what they said. Longlegged girls flashing the promise of ecstasy. Some of them looking a trifle scared; maybe they

were hip to the evil deeds of his former self. Macy was aware of what crimes the previous user of his body had committed, and sometimes they scared him a little, too. "In here," Fredericks said. Into a bright, gaudy room, twice the size of Fredericks' office. "I'd like you to meet the chief of daytime news, Paul. One hell of a guy. Harold Griswold, and he's some beautiful son-of-a-bitch. Harold, here's our new man, Paul Macy. Number six on the late news. Bercovici told you the story, right? Right. He's going to fit in here perfectly."

Griswold stood up, a slow and complex process, and smiled. Macy smiled. His facial muscles were beginning to ache from all the smiling he had done in the last hour and a half. One doesn't smile much at a Rehab Center. He shook the hand of the chief of daytime news. Griswold was implausibly tall, slabjawed, perhaps fifty years old, obviously a man of great prestige; he reminded Macy somehow of George Washington. He wore a bright blue tank suit, an earwatch, and an alabaster breastplate of several kinds of exotic polished woods. His office was like a museum annex, with works of art everywhere: shaped paintings, crystallines, talk-spikes, programmed resonances. A million-dollar collection. In the corner, to the right of Griswold's kidney-shaped desk, stood a striking psychosculpture, a figure of an old woman. Macy, who had been glancing from piece to piece by way of an implied compliment to Griswold, lurched forward at the sight of the last work, coughed, grabbed the edge of the desk to steady himself. He felt as though he had been clubbed at the back of the neck. Instantly friendly hands

clutched at him. "Are you all right? What's the trouble, fella?" Macy fought off dizziness. He straightened and shook himself free of the propping hands.

"I don't know what hit me," he muttered. "Just as I looked at that sculpture in the corner—"

"The Hamlin over there?" Griswold asked. "One of my favorites. A gift from my first wife, ten years back, when Hamlin was still an unknown—"

"If you don't mind—some cold water—"

Two gulps. Another cup. Three gulps. Carefully averting his eyes from the figure of the old woman. The Hamlin over there. The sleek smooth network men frowning at him, then erasing the frowns the instant he noticed. Everyone so solicitous. "Forgive me," he said. "You know, it's only my first day on the outside. The strain, the tension."

"Of course. The tension." Griswold.

"The strain. We understand." Fredericks.

He forced himself to look at the psychosculpture. The Hamlin over there. An excellent piece of work. Poignance; pathos; a sense of the tragedy of aging, a sense of the heroism of defying time. A soft hum coming from its resonators, subtly coloring the mood it was designed to stimulate. The Hamlin over there. Macy said, "That's *Nathaniel* Hamlin who did it?"

"Right," Griswold said. "God only knows what it's worth, now. On account of Hamlin's tragic fate. Not that I have the slightest interest in selling, but of course when an artist dies young his work skyrockets amazingly in value."

He didn't know, then. He couldn't

just be pretending. And he couldn't be that dumb. Either Bercovici hadn't told him, or he'd been told and hadn't cared enough to remember. That was interesting. Macy was shaken, though, by the intensity of his reaction to the unexpected sight of the sculpture. They hadn't warned him at the Rehab Center that such things might happen. He made a mental note to ask about it when he went back next week for his first session of outpatient post-therapy therapy. And a mental note, also, to stay out of Griswold's office as much as possible. The sculpture was still exerting an effect on him. He felt an undertow, the sucking of a subcerebral ocean in his mind. Hollow echoing sounds of surf from far below. A hammering against the threshold of consciousness. The Hamlin over there. That's *Nathaniel* Hamlin who did it? On account of his tragic fate. Jesus. Jesus. A bad attack of wobbly knees. Sweaty forehead. Paroxysms of confusion. Going to collapse, going to fall down in a screaming fit, going to vomit all over Harold Griswold's nappy green electronic carpet. Unless you regain control fast. He turned apologetically to Stilton Fredericks and said in a thick furry voice, "It's more upsetting than I thought. You'd better get me out of here fast."

Fredericks took his arm. A firm grasp. To Griswold: "I'll explain afterward." Propelling Macy urgently toward the door. Stumbling feet. Head swaying on neck. Jesus. Outside the office, finally.

The moment of intolerable angst ebbing.

"I feel much better now," Macy murmured.

"Can I get you a pill?"

"No. No. Nothing."

"Are you sure you're all right?"

"Sure."

"You don't look all right."

"It'll pass. It shook me up more than I expected. Listen, Fredericks—Stilton—I don't want you to think that I'm fragile, or anything, but you know I've just been released from the Rehab Center, and for the first few days—"

"It's perfectly natural," said Fredericks. A comradely pat on the shoulder. "We understand the problem. We can make allowances. This was my fault, anyway. I should have checked things out before I brought you in there. He's got so many works of art in his office, though—"

"Sure. How could you have known?"

"I should have checked anyway. Now that I see the difficulty, I'll check the whole building. I simply didn't realize that it would upset you so much to come face to face with one of your own sculptures."

"Not mine," Macy said, shaking his head emphatically. "Not mine."

TWO

DAYTIME IT WASN'T SO bad. He built a cozy routine for himself and lived within it, just as they had advised him at the Center to do. The Rehab people had found him a little apartment near the upper tip of Old Manhattan, five minutes from the network office by short-hop tube, forty minutes if he walked; he hadn't wanted to risk exposing himself to the chaotic rush-hour environment of the tubes too soon, and so at first he went to work on foot. The exercise was good for him, and

he had nothing better to do with his time, anyway. But from the fourth day on he took the tube. The jostling and the screeching of wheels turned out not to bother him as much as he feared it might, and, packed belly-to-rump in the cars, he didn't have to worry about people staring at him or his Rehab badge. At work he slipped easily and comfortably into the network's news-broadcast operation. He'd had six months of vocational training at the Center, so he came to his new career already skilled in voice projection, sincerity dynamics, makeup technique, and other such things: he needed only to learn the details of the network's daily practice, the authority-levels and flow-patterns and such. Everybody was kind to him, although after the first few days most of them dropped the maddening exaggerated courtesy that made him feel like such a cripple. They showed him what to do, they covered his blunders, they responded patiently and good-humoredly to his questions. In the beginning Fredericks didn't let him do any actual broadcasting, just dummy off-the-air runs under simulated studio circumstances. Instead he was put to work reading scripts aloud for the timing, and monitoring air-checks of the other broadcasters. But he did so well at the dummy runs that by the fifth day they were putting him on the late news to do ninety-second capsule reports in what they called the mosaic-texture section, in which a bunch of broadcasters offered quick bouncy segments of the news in swift succession. Fredericks told him that in another few weeks he'd be allowed to handle full-scale stories, even to select his own accompanying hover-eye coverage. So all went well professionally.

The nights were something else.

Lonely, for one thing. *You'd be wisest to avoid sexual liaisons at least at the outset*, the Center therapists had suggested. *They could be disturbing during the initial two or three weeks of adjustment.* He paid heed. He refrained from bringing any of the network girls home with him, though plenty of them made it clear that they were available. Just ask, honey. At night he sat alone in the modest apartment. Watching a lot of holovision. Pretending that it was important to his career to study how the various networks handled the news. In truth he simply wanted the companionship of the bright screen and the loud audio; he left it on even when he wasn't watching anything.

He didn't go out in the evenings. A matter of economy, he told himself. Supposedly he had been a wealthy man in his former life, or at least pretty damned prosperous. A successful artist, work in constant demand, prices going up at the gallery every year, that kind of thing. But his assets had been forfeit to the state. Most of his money had been used up by the costs of his therapy and the termination settlement awarded his wife. What little was left had gone into renting and furnishing his apartment. He was essentially a pauper until the network salary checks began coming in. But he knew that the real reason for staying home was fear. He wasn't ready yet to explore the night-world of this formidable city. He couldn't go out there while his new self was still moist and malleable around the edges.

Then there were the dreams.

He hadn't had nightmares at the Rehab Center. He had them now. Traumatic identity crises punctuated

his sleep. He ran breathlessly down long gleaming ropy corridors, pursued by a man who wore his face. He stood by the shore of a viscous gray-green pool that bubbled and steamed and heaved, and a gnarled hairy claw reached up from its depths and groped for him. He tiptoed across a sea of quicksand, sinking deeper and deeper, and something underneath plucked at his toes. Pulling him under with a loud plop. A coven of monsters waiting down below. Teeth and green horns and yellow eyes. Often he woke up shrieking. And then lay awake, listening to something knocking on the inside of his skull. Let me out, let me out, let me out! Great gusts of wind blew through his brain. Vast snorting snores setting the medulla atremble. A slumbering giant, restless, cranky, trapped behind his forehead. Belching and farting within his head. Knock. Knock. Knock. Also the peculiar doubleness of self assailed him, the sensation of being enshrouded and entangled in the scraps and threads of his old identity, so that he momentarily was sucked back into it. I am Nat Hamlin. Married, successful. Psychosculptor. This is my face. These are my hands. Why am I in this unfamiliar little apartment? No. No. I am Paul Macy. I used to be. Formerly was. In another country, so to speak. And besides the stench is dead. Why does he haunt me? I am not Nat Hamlin. Sometimes at night it was hard to be sure of that, though. By the third night Macy dreaded going to bed. There was that man with his face, always haunting him when he crossed into dreamland. Waking in distress, he wanted to call a friend and ask for reassurance. But he had no friends. The old ones had

been washed away by the therapy, and he hadn't made any new ones yet, except a few people he had come to know at the Rehab Center, fellow re-constructs, and he didn't want to bother them in the middle of the night. Maybe they had demons of their own to wrestle with. And the people from the network. Mustn't call them. You'd blow the whole pretense of your stability in one gush of panicky talk. Nor could he call any of his therapists. Dr. Brewster, Dr. Ianuzzi, Dr. Gomez. You're on your own, they said. We're cutting the umbilicus. So. So. All alone. Sweat it out. Eventually, no matter how bad a night it was, he would sleep. Eventually.

"Is there any chance," Macy asked, "that the Rehab job didn't completely take? I mean, sometimes I think I can feel Hamlin trying to break through."

A Tuesday late in May, 2011. One week after his discharge from the Rehab Center. His first session of post-therapy therapy. Dr. Gomez, round-faced, swarthy, drooping black mustache, not much chin, scowling and chewing on a computer stylus. Soft buzzing voice. "No chance of that at all, Macy."

"But these dreams—"

"A little psychic static, is all. What gives you the idea Hamlin still exists?"

"During these nightmares I feel him pushing inside my head. Like somebody trying to get out." "Don't mess things up with your pretty imagery, Macy. You've been having some bad dreams. Everybody has bad dreams. You think I'm immune? I've got my share of lousy karma. Without any fancy hypotheses, tell me why you think it's Hamlin." "The man with

my face chasing me." "A metaphor for your own unfocused past, maybe." "A sense of confusion. Not knowing who I really am." "Who are you, really?" "Paul Macy. But—" "That's who you really are. Nat Hamlin doesn't exist any more. He's been stripped out of your body, cell by cell, and extinguished. You really surprise me, Macy. I thought you were going to make one of the best adjustments I ever saw."

"I felt that way too," Macy said. "But since I've been outside there have been these—these bursts of psychic static. I'm scared. What if Hamlin's still there?"

"Hamlin exists only as an abstract concept. He's a famous psychosculptor who ran into trouble with the law and was eradicated. Now he exists only through his works. Like Mozart. Like Michelangelo. He isn't in your head."

Macy said, "My first day at the network, I walked into the office of one of the high executives and there was a big Hamlin sculpture in the corner. I looked at it and I recognized it for what it was and I just took it in, you know, the way I'd take in a Michelangelo, and after a fraction of a second I had this sensation like somebody had banged me on the head with a mallet. I almost fell over. The impact was tremendous. How do you account for that, Dr. Gomez?"

"How do *you* account for it?"

"Like it was Hamlin still inside me, standing up and yelling, That's mine, I made that! Such a surge of pride and identity that I felt it on the conscious level as physical pain."

"Balls," the doctor said. "Hamlin's gone."

"How can you be sure of that?"

Gomez sighed. "Look," he said, and

jabbed an output node. On the walls of his office blossomed screened images of Macy's psychological profiles. Gomez pointed. "Over on the left, that's the EEG of Nat Hamlin. You see those greasy waves of psychopathic tendency, those ugly nasty jiggles? You see those electrical storms going on in that man's head? That's a sick EEG. That's sick as hell. Right? Now look over here. We've begun the mindpick operation. We're wiping out Nat Hamlin. The waves get smoother. Sweet as a baby. Chart after chart. Look. Look. Look. As Hamlin goes, we bring in Macy. You can see the overlay here. *This* is what a double mind looks like. Vestigial Hamlin, incipient Macy. Yes? Two distinct electrical patterns, no problems at all distinguishing one from the other. And now, this side of the room, you can see Hamlin wiped out entirely. Can you find any of the typical Hamlin wave-forms? By shit, can you? You aren't saying anything, Macy. There's your brain on the wall. Alpha, beta, the whole mess. Compare your waves and Hamlin's. Altogether different. Two separate patterns. He's him, you're you. The machine says so. It isn't a matter of opinion, it's a matter of voltage thresholds. A voltage doesn't lie. Amperes don't have opinions. Resistances don't fuck around with you for sly tactical reasons. We're dealing in objective facts, and the objective facts tell me that Nat Hamlin has been wiped out. They ought to tell you that too."

"The dreams—the sight of that psychosculpture—"

"So you're a little unstable. A couple of surprise adjustment traumas. But Hamlin? No."

"Another thing. My first day out,

that same day, I met a girl in the street, somebody from Hamlin's life. She kept calling me Nat. Telling me she loved me."

"Weren't you wearing your Rehab badge?"

"Of course I was."

"And the dumb bitch still dumped all that garbage on you?"

"I suppose she's disturbed mentally herself. I don't know. Anyway," Macy said, "she was doing all this to me, Nat this and Nat that, paying no attention when I told her I was Paul Macy, and out of nowhere I felt, well, like hot on top of my head, and for half a second I didn't know who I was. Which one of me I was. It was like something had reached into my head and mixed everything up. I could even remember myself making a psychosculpture of the girl. You see, she was one of Hamlin's models, apparently, and I had this flickering memory of her posing, me at a sculptor's keyboard—"

"Crap." Gomez said.

"What?"

"Crap. It wasn't a memory. You couldn't possibly remember anything out of Nat Hamlin's life."

"What was it, then?"

"It was an episode of free-floating masochism, Macy. A normal self-injury wish. You invented this phantom image of yourself sculpting the girl because you wanted to fool yourself into thinking that Hamlin was breaking through."

"But I don't see why—"

"Shut up and I'll explain the mechanism. You lived at this Center for four years, right, and you got constant attention. It was like being in the womb. Every need instantly attended to. Okay, it's time for Paul Macy to be born, and

we toss you out into the world on your ass. Not exactly as rough as that, we find you a job first, we find you a place to live, but it's still a ballbreaker to get evicted. Out you go. Suddenly no umbilicus to feed you. Suddenly no placenta to cuddle in. Well, you want attention, and one way to get it is to come here yelling that your personality reconstruct didn't really take, that Hamlin is knocking around inside your head. I don't mean that this is a conscious thing. It's a mechanism. Your rational self just wants to make a decent adjustment to outside life and live happily ever after as Paul Macy, but there's this irrational side of us too. Which often operates directly counter to the needs and desires of the rational side. Suppose I tell somebody that his sanity depends on never calling his mother-in-law by her first name, okay? And he nods, he says, yes, I understand, if I do that it'll really wreck me. So of course every time he sees the old witch he finds that her first name is on the tip of his tongue. He'll have dreams in which he calls her by her first name. He'll fantasy it while he's sitting at his desk. Because it's the most destructive fucking thing he could possibly do, so of course the temptation to do it keeps rising out of his head, and he's constantly imagining he *has* done it. Now back to you. The last thing you want to have happen is for Hamlin to come back to life, so naturally you fantasy yourself making a sculpture of this girl. Which upsets you and sends you in a sweat back to me, screaming for help. The immediate result of this mechanism is to give you bad dreams and general trauma, and an incidental side effect is to supply you with that claim on my attention

that you unconsciously crave. You see how the dark side of our mind always craps us up? But don't worry about it, Macy. None of this is real, in the sense that Hamlin *is* there. Oh, sure, it's real in a psychological sense, but so what?" Gomez grinned triumphantly. "You're a smart boy. You've been following all this, right?"

Macy said, "Isn't it possible to run some new EEGs all the same? What if I did come up with a double wave pattern?"

"You really want me to coddle you, don't you?"

"Would it be so hard to make an empirical test?"

"I could do it in five minutes."

"Why not, then?"

"Because I don't believe in giving in to an outpatient's weepy fantasies. You think you're my first reconstruct job? I've had a hundred of you. I know what's possible and what isn't. If I tell you Hamlin is eradicated, it's because I *know* Hamlin is eradicated. I'm not just being a bullheaded bastard."

"All right, so I'm irrational," Macy said. "But if I had the evidence of the EEG in front of me—"

"I won't play that game with you. The fantasy came from inside you; let the cure for it come from in there too. Sweat it out. Convince yourself that your belief in Hamlin's continued existence is nothing but a move to get sympathy from us."

"And if the hallucinations don't go away?"

"They have to."

"If they don't, though?"

"You'll be here again next Tuesday," Gomez said. "I won't be seeing you then. Dr. Ianuzzi will, and as you know she's an entirely different kind of doc-

tor. Sweet and refined and sympathetic, whereas I'm a vulgar and hostile son of a bitch. If this stuff is still bothering you then, maybe she'll run an EEG for you, though I hope she doesn't. I won't, Macy. I can't. The top sergeant never kisses you and tucks you in, no matter how piteously you ask him, and I'm top sergeant on this team. So come back next week." Gomez stood up. "I saw you on the late news last night. You weren't bad at all."

The next morning, he found a message cube addressed to him in his box at the office. Puzzled, he plugged the glossy little cassette into his desk's output slot. The face of the girl who had talked to him on the street the week before appeared on the screen. Red-rimmed eyes, hollow cheeks. Her hair straggly, unkempt. She offered the camera an uncertain lopsided grin and said, "I saw you on holovision and so I knew where to send this. Please, Nat, don't just ignore me. I can't tell you—"

His hand shot out and killed the playback. *Please, Nat.* He couldn't take that. The use of his old name: it was like slivers of wood under his fingernails, needles probing behind his eyes. Last night the dreams had been worse than ever. Seeing himself as Siamese twins, one body ripping and clawing at its identical brother. And then the trapdoor opening in the attic floor and the shambling disemboweled thing lurching up out of it. The girl had initiated all his traumas; there hadn't been bad dreams before that miserable accidental meeting. He wasn't going to give her a second chance to screw him up. If that bastard Gomez wouldn't offer supportive therapy, he was simply going to have to defend himself against

potential inner turmoil. And therefore it was necessary to avoid new sources of anguish. Macy switched the output control to *Erase* and reached for the button. Then he saw the girl's sad, eroded face in his mind. A fellow human being. She also suffers. I could at least listen once. He turned to *Playback* again and she reappeared, saying, "I saw you on holovision and so I knew where to send this. Please, Nat, don't just ignore me. I can't tell you how much you still mean to me, even after everything. I know you've been through Rehab and things must be very strange to you, and you don't want to hear from people out of your old life. But finding you like that was such a miracle that I can't simply pretend you don't exist. Because I can't keep going like this much longer, Nat. I'm in bad shape. I need help. I'm sinking and somebody's got to throw me a rope." There was more in that vein. She said she'd wait for him Wednesday night at 6 o'clock on the northeast corner of 227th and Broadway, opposite the network building, and that she'd be waiting for him the same time the next two nights also, in case he wasn't free Wednesday. Or if he wanted to make other arrangements he could call her at her home, any day after eleven in the morning, such-and-such a number. With all my love. Yours truly, Lissa Moore.

I can't, he thought. I don't dare. He erased the cube. That night he left ten minutes early, going out the building's east entrance to avoid her. He did the same on Thursday and Friday.

On Monday there was a new cube from her. He carried it around for three hours, unwilling to erase it, afraid to play it, and finally slipped it into the

slot. On the screen, her pale face against a black velvet backdrop. The mouth drawn into a quirky grimace. A hyperthyroid bulge to the eyes that he hadn't noticed before. The lighting in the booth where she'd recorded the message was too bright, and it struck her cheeks so fiercely that it seemed to strip them to the bone. Her voice, blurring, unmodulated: "You didn't come. I waited, but you didn't come. All right, Nat. Paul. Maybe you don't give a damn about me. Maybe you've got your own neck to look out for and can't fool around with me. I won't bother you after today. I'll wait tonight, 6 o'clock, same corner, Broadway and 227th, northeast side. You aren't there by half past eight, I'll be dead by nine. I mean it. Now it's up to you."

THREE

A FEW MINUTES past 6, he was still in the central newsroom, finishing his last piece of the day. A cold sullen anger still gripped him. Let the bitch kill herself. I won't be blackmailed like that. She doesn't mean anything to me except trouble. With a sharp stabbing gesture he summoned control of the hovereye that patrolled the street outside the network office building, forever keeping watch for demonstrators, bombers, self-immolators. With newly skillful motions Macy brought the airborne camera down the block until it was scanning the streetcorner where Lissa had said she'd wait. Now the fine control, the vernier. Yes, there she is. Pacing in a taut little circle. A self-contained zone of tension on the busy street. Damn her. She can do whatever

she likes to herself. Whatever she likes. Macy signed himself out of the newsroom and, gliding on the glacial flow of his rage, drifted toward the liftshaft. Down forty stories. Sweeping quickly through the lobby. Outside. A soft spring evening. Long lines of patient homegoers wearily filing into the tubemouth. So easy to avoid her, in this crowd. Just slide on past. He found himself walking toward her, though. One-and-two-and-one-and-two; he couldn't stop. She seemed to be talking to herself; eyes turned inward, she didn't notice him approaching. From twenty yards away he glowered at her. Who the hell does she think she is, trying to use me this way? Playing on my sympathies. Oh, I need you, I need you so much! With throbbing violins. And working on my sense of guilt. Meet me on the corner or I'll jump off the Palisades Bridge! Sure. What business is it of mine if you want to jump off a bridge, baby? I've got nothing to feel guilty about. Guilt? I haven't done a thing. I'm brand new in the world. Christ, I'm even a virgin. That's right: Paul Macy is a virgin. A god-damn virgin. He was only a few feet from her, now, but she hadn't seen him yet. He started to touch her arm, but halted as a curious discomfort flitted across his skull. That sense of doubleness, again, that scrambling of identities. Disorientation. A bonging sensation like the muffled tolling of a distant bell. With it came a fast spasm of nausea, a light tightening around his adam's-apple. Then all the disturbing symptoms vanished. He nudged her elbow. "All right," he said gruffly. "Wake up! Here I am. You're pulling a lousy stinking trick, but I fell for it. And here I am."

"Nat!" Looking at him in mingled amazement and delight. Color stippling her cheeks. Eyes fluttering; she's scared of me, he realized suddenly. He experienced a second spasm of strange uneasiness, here and gone before it had any real effect. "Oh, Nat, thank God you came!"

"No," he said. "Let's get this established once and for all. My name's Paul Macy. You want to have anything to do with me, you call me by that name, and no options about it. Paul Macy. Say it now."

"P-Paul."

"Say it all."

"Paul Macy. Paul Macy."

"Good." He was starting to get a headache: two spikes of pain converging on the center of his head. This girl was no good for him. "Nat Hamlin doesn't exist any more, and don't you forget it," he said. "Now: you wanted me to meet you, and I met you. What's on your mind?"

"You sound so cruel, Paul." She stumbled on the *Paul*.

"Just annoyed. Your suicide threat—what a miserable tactic that is. I god-damn well should have called your bluff."

"I wasn't bluffing."

"Whatever you say. I fell for it. I'm here. What do you want?"

"We can't talk here," she said. "Not in the middle of a crowd. Not out on the street."

"Where, then?"

"Your place?"

He shook his head. "Absolutely not."

"Mine, then. We can be there in fifteen minutes. Everything's filthy, but—"

"What about a restaurant?" he suggested.

She brightened. "That would be okay. Any place you like. One of your favorites, where you'd feel comfortable."

He tried to think of one of his favorite restaurants.

"I don't know any restaurants," he said. "You pick one."

"You don't know any? But you always ate out, practically every night. It was like a compulsion with you. You—"

"That was Nat Hamlin," he said. "Hamlin might have been the one who ate out a lot. If you say so. But not me. Not yet." He reached into his stock of memories, looking for the names of some Manhattan restaurants. Zero. They really should have given him some restaurant memories when they were constructing the Paul Macy person at the Rehab Center. It wouldn't have been any big effort for them. They had given him all kinds of other things. Star of the high school lacrosse team. Chicken pox. A mother and a father. Breaking his leg on the slopes at Gstaad. Reading Proust and Hemingway. Putting his hand under Jeanie Grossman's polo shirt. Thirty-five years of ersatz memories. But no information about restaurants. Maybe Gomez, Ianuzzi, and Brewster didn't eat out much. Or perhaps the restaurant stuff was hidden in some cranny of his mind that he hadn't found yet. He said, "I mean it. I've got no suggestions. You pick."

"There a people's restaurant two blocks from here. I've been having lunch at it a lot. You know it?"

"No."

"We could go there," she said.

It was a deep, narrow room with tarnishing brass walls and a bunch of

sputtering defective light-loops threaded through the thatch-work ceiling. Service was cafeteria-style; you took what you wanted from servo-actuated cubbyholes along the power-counter. Then you found seats at dreary long community tables. Macy, following Lissa to the counter, whispered, "How do you know how much anything costs?"

"It's a people's restaurant."

"So?"

"You don't know what that is?"

"I'm new to a lot of this."

"You pay whatever you can afford," she said. "If you don't have any money, you just eat, and make it up next time. Or you go around back and help wash dishes."

"Does the system work?" he asked.

"Not very well." She smiled bleakly and began piling food on her tray. In a few moments she had it completely crammed with dishes. Five different kinds of synthetic meats, a mound of salads and vegetables, three rolls, and other things. He was more sparing: vegetable juice, proteoid steak, fried kelp, a cup of no-caffy. At the end of the counter stood a central-credit console. Lissa walked by it without giving it a glance. Macy hesitated a moment, confused, peering into the glossy dark-green screen. In a flustered way he authorized the console to charge his credit account ten dollars. A fat flat-faced girl waiting behind him in line snorted contemptuously. He wondered if he had paid too much or too little. Lissa was already far down the aisle, heading for an empty table at the back of the restaurant. He seized his tray and hurried after her.

They sat facing each other over the bare grim plank of the table-top. "I've

got some golds," she said. "Want one?"

"I'm not sure."

"Try." She pulled out a pack. Its brim snapped up and a cigarette popped out. He took it. She took one also, and he carefully watched her nip the ignition pod with her nail. He did the same. A deep pull. Almost at once he felt the dizziness and the acceleration of his heartbeat. She winked at him and blew smoke in his face. Then she started to eat, stuffing the food down as if she hadn't had anything in weeks. The way she wolfed it, so unselfconscious in her gluttony, fascinated him: it was like watching a fire sweep through a dry meadow. Head forward, jaws working frantically. Sounds of chewing. White teeth flashing. He sat still, dragging on the cigarette, ineffectually trying to spear a strand of kelp with his fork. She looked up. "Aren't you hungry?" she asked, mouth full.

"Not as hungry as you are, I guess."

"Don't mind me."

Her wrists were dirty and there was a film of grime visible on her neck. She was wearing the same blue coat as the other day. Again, no makeup. Her fingernails were ragged. But she wasn't merely outwardly unkempt; she conveyed a sense of inner disintegration that terrified him. Obviously she had once been a beautiful girl, perhaps extraordinarily beautiful. Traces of that beauty remained. She had a parched, ravaged look, though, as if fevers of the soul had been consuming her substance. Her eyes, large and bloodshot, never were still. Always a birdlike flickering from place to place. Cheeks hollower than they ought to be. She could use about ten pounds more, he figured. And a bath. He stubbed out

his roach and cut himself a slice of steak. Filet of papier-mache. He gagged.

Lissa said, "God, that's better! Some food in the gut again."

"Why were you so hungry?"

"I always am. I'm burning up."

"Are you sick?"

She shrugged. "Who knows?" Her eyes momentarily rested on his. "I'm trying to think of you as Paul Macy. It isn't easy, sitting here with Nat Hamlin opposite me."

"Nat Hamlin doesn't exist."

"You really don't remember me?"

"Zero," he said.

"Shit almighty! What did they *do* to you at the Rehab Center?"

He said, "They pumped Nat Hamlin full of memory-dissolving drugs until every bit of him was flushed away. Which left a kind of zombie, you see? A healthy empty body. Society doesn't like to waste a good healthy body. So then they built me inside the zombie's head."

"Built you? What do you mean, built?"

"Created an identity for me." He shut his eyes a moment. There was a tightness at his collar. Choking sensation. He wasn't supposed to have to explain any of this. The world was supposed to take it all for granted. "They built up a past, a cluster of events that I could move around in as if it had really happened. Like I grew up in Idaho Falls, Idaho, and moved to Seattle when I was 12. My father was a propulsion engineer and my mother taught school. They're both dead now. No brothers. No sisters. I collected African stamps and I did a lot of hunting and fishing. I went to college, UCLA, class of '93, got a de-

gree in philosophy of communication. Two years of national service, stationed in Bolivia and Ecuador, doing voice-overs for the People's Democratic Channel. Then various TV and HV jobs in Europe and the States, and now here in New York. Et cetera, et cetera."

"God," she said. "And it's all phony?"

"Pretty near. It follows Nat Hamlin's biography only as closely as it has to. Like in age. Or Hamlin broke a leg when he was 26 and you can see that in the bone, so they've given me a skiing accident for that year."

"What would happen if I checked the UCLA alumni records, looking for Paul Macy in the class of '93?"

"You'd find him. With a Rehab asterisk saying that this is a pro forma entry covering a retroactively established identity. Same thing if you looked up the Idaho Falls birth register. They do a very thorough job."

"Christ," Lissa said. And shivered. "How creepy this is! You actually are a whole new person."

"I don't know how whole I am. But I'm new, all right."

"You don't have any idea who I am, then."

"You used to pose for Nat Hamlin, didn't you?"

She looked startled. "How come you know that? I haven't said anything about—"

"The day you stopped me in the street," he said, "while we were talking, I got a flash picture of you naked in a kind of studio, and I was leaning over a complicated keyboard thing and telling you to scream. Like a psychosculptor trying to get an emotional effect. I saw it maybe half a second, then it was gone." He moistened his lips. "It

was like a piece of Nat Hamlin's blotted-out mind surfacing into mine."

"Or a piece of my mind reaching into yours," she said.

"Eh?"

"It happens. I can't keep it under control." A shrill giggle. "Wherever you got it from, it was right. I was one of Nat Hamlin's models. From January to August, '06, when he was working on his *Antigone 21*. The one the Metropolitan bought. His last big work, before his breakdown. You know about his breakdown?"

"Some. Don't talk about it." He felt a band of fire across his forehead. Simply being close to someone out of the old existence this long was painful. "Can I have another gold?"

She offered the cigarette and said, "I was also his mistress, all through '05 and most of '06. He said he'd get a divorce and marry me. Like Rembrandt. Like Renoir. Falling in love with the model. Only he went out of his head instead. Doing all those crazy things." Macy, suddenly vulnerable, tried to stop her with an upraised hand, but there was no halting the flow of her words. "The last time I saw him was Thanksgiving Day, 2006. At his studio. We had a fight and he threw me down the stairs." She winced. Into his mind a searing image: an endless flight, the girl falling, falling, skirt up around her thighs, legs kicking, arms clutching, the dwindling scream, the sudden twist and impact. A sound of something cracking. "In the hospital six weeks with a broken pelvis. When I got out they were hunting him from Connecticut to Kansas. And then—"

"No more!" he yelled. People at other tables turned to look.

She shrank away from him. "I'm

sorry," she said, folding into herself, huddling, shaking. His cheeks were hot with shame and turmoil. After a moment she said softly, "Does it hurt a lot when I talk about him?"

A nod. Silence.

"You asked me to see you because you were in trouble," he said at length.

"Yes."

"Would you honestly have killed yourself if I hadn't shown up?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"I'm all alone. I have nobody at all. And I'm going out of my mind."

"How do you know?"

"I hear voices. Other people's minds come into mine. And mine goes into theirs. Extra sensory. Perception."

"ESP?" he said. "Like—what is it, mental telepathy?"

"Telepathy. That's what it is. ESP. Telepathy."

"I didn't think that really existed."

A bitter laugh. "You bet your ass. Sitting right here in front of you. The genuine article."

"You can read minds?" he said, feeling dreamfogged and unreal.

"Not exactly read. Just touch, mind to mind. It isn't under my conscious control. Things drift in, drift out. Voices humming in my brain, a word, a phrase, an image. It's been happening since I was ten, twelve years old. Only much worse now. Much, much worse." Trembling. "The past two years. Hell. Absolute hell."

"How so?"

"I don't know who I am any more a lot of the time," she said. "I get to be five, six people at once. This mushy noise in my head. The buzzing. The voices. Like static, only sometimes words drift in on the static. I pick up

all these weird emotions, and they scare me. Not knowing if I'm imagining or not. There's somebody two tables away who wants to rape me. Wishes he dared. I'm naked and bloody in his head, spreadeagled, arms and legs tied to the furniture. And over to my left, someone else, a woman, she's transmitting the odor of shit. She sees me like some kind of giant turd sitting here. I don't know why. And then you—"

"No," he said. "Don't tell me."

"It isn't really ugly. You think I'm dirty and you want to take me home and give me a bath. And fuck me afterward. That's okay. I know I'm dirty. And I'd like to go to bed with you, too. But I can't stand all this cross-talk in my head. I'm wide open, Nat, wide open to every stray thought, and—"

"Paul."

"What?"

"I said, call me Paul. It's important to me."

"But you're—"

"Paul Macy."

"Just now, though, you were coming through as Nat Hamlin to me. From deep underneath."

"No. Hamlin's gone," he said. "I'm Paul Macy." A feeling of seasickness. The light-loops swaying and hissing overhead. He found himself covering her hand with his. Ragged cuticles against his fingertips. He said, "If you're suffering so much, why don't you get some help? Maybe there's a cure for ESP. Is that what you want, a cure? I could take you to see Dr. Ianuzzi, she's a very sensitive woman, she could get you into the right kind of psychiatric hospital and—"

"And they'd give me shock treatment," Lissa said. "Memory dislocation with drugs, like I was a criminal. They'd wash half my brain out trying to heal me. There wouldn't be anything of me left. I'm afraid of therapy. I haven't ever gone. I don't want to go."

"What do you want to do?"

"I don't know."

"Then what am I supposed to do for you?" he asked.

"I don't know that either, Paul. I'm absolutely fucked up in the head, so there's no use asking me rational questions." Her eyes glittering eerily. Sick, sick, sick. "What you really ought to do," she said, "is get the hell away from me, right now, like you've wanted to do since the first minute you saw me. Only don't. God, please, don't. Help me. Help me."

"How?"

"Just be with me a little. I'm all alone. I've cut myself off from the whole world. Look, you know how it is with me? I don't have a job. I don't have friends any more. I look in the mirror and I see my own skeleton. I sit home and wait for the voices to go away, and they scream and scream at me until my head is coming off. I live off the welfare checks. Then I go out for a walk one day, on and on and on, way the hell uptown, and I crash into some guy on the street and he turns around and he's Nat Hamlin, he's the only man I ever really loved, only he isn't Hamlin any more, he's Paul Macy, that's what he says, and—" She caught her breath. "All right. You don't know me at all and I guess I can't say I know you. But I know your body. Every inch. That's a familiar thing to me, a landmark, something I can an-

chor myself to. Let me anchor. Let me hold on. I'm going under, Paul. I'm drowning, and maybe you can hold me up, for the sake of what I used to mean to the person you used to be. Maybe. Maybe for a little while. You don't owe it to me, you don't owe me anything, you could get right up and walk out of here and you'd have every right. But don't. Because I need you."

Sweat-soaked, numb, fists pressed together under the table, he felt a wild surge of pity for her. He felt like saying. Yes, of course, whatever I can do to help you. Come home with me, take a bath, let's blow a few golds and talk about things, this telepathy of yours, this delusion. Not because I ever knew you. Not because the things that happened between you and Nat Hamlin give you any claim on me. But only because you're a suffering human being and you've turned to me for help, and how can I refuse? An act of grace. Yes, yes, I will be your anchor.

Instead he said, "You're asking a hell of a lot from me. I'm not the most stable individual in the world either. And I'm under doctor's orders to keep away from people out of Nat Hamlin's life. You could be big trouble for me. And me for you. I think the risks for both of us are bigger than the rewards."

"Does that mean you don't want to get involved?"

"I'm afraid so."

"Sorry I wasted so much of your time," she said. In a dead voice. No change of expression. Not really believing he means it, maybe.

"It wasn't wasted. I only wish I was in shape to do you any good. But a Rehab lives right on the edge of collapse himself, in the beginning. He's

got to build a whole new life. So when you ask somebody like that to take on the additional burden—" All right, Macy. Stop explaining things, get up, walk out of here, before she starts crying and you start listening to her again. Up. You don't owe her a thing. You have your own troubles and they aren't small ones. Getting to his feet, now. The girl watching him, stricken, incredulous. Giving her a sickly smile, knowing that a smile of any kind is out of context when you're condemning somebody to death. Turning. Walking away from her, up the aisle of the people's restaurant, past the counter, the sauerkraut and the algae-cakes. Another ten strides and you're out the door.

A scream from the back of the room.

"No! Come back! Paul! Paul! *Nat!*"

Her words leaped across the gulf between them like a flight of arrows. Six direct hits. Thwack thwack thwak thwak thwack *thwack!* The last one a killer, straight through from back to chest. He staggered. St. Sebastian stumbling in the restaurant aisle. His brain on fire, something very strange happening in there, like the two hemispheres splitting apart and taking up independent existence. And then a voice, speaking quite distinctly from a point just above his left ear, saying:

—How could you walk out on her like that, you snotty creep?

He hit the floor hard, landing elbow-first. A stunning burst of pain. Within that cone of red agony a curious clarity of perception.

Who said that? he asked, losing consciousness. And, going under, he heard:

—I did. Nat Hamlin. Your twin brother Nat.

HE WAS AT WORK in his studio again, after too long a layoff. All the sculpting equipment covered with a fine coating of dust. Maybe the delicate inner mechanisms are ruined, or at least imprecise. Try to build an armature for a man, end up with a chimp, something like that. He checked all the calibration carefully: everything in order, surprisingly. Just dusty. Ought to be, after all these years. A wonder it wasn't busted up by vandals. Fucking vandals all over the place. Goths, too. He touched the main keyboard lightly. This was going to be his chef d'oeuvre, a group composition, a contemporary equivalent of *The Burghers of Calais*. But fragmented, intense, multi-valued. Call it something unpretentious, like *The Human Condition*. A fucking headache getting all the models together at the same time. But the group interactions are important: shit, they're the whole point of the thing! There they all stand, now. The fat lady from the circus, eight hundred pounds of quivering suet. Half a ton of laughs. The kid from the student co-op, the one with the shaven head. Gomez, the skull doctor, for that little touch of hostility. The pregnant chick from the supersupermarket. Get the clothes off, baby, show that bulge. Bellybutton sticking way out like a handle. And the vice-president from the bank, very very proper, turn him on a little when we're ready to start. Also the old plaster model from art school days, Apollo Belvedere, missing his prick. A real technical stunt, trying to make psychosculpture out of a hunk of plaster. Faking in the appropriate responses: the test of a master. A cat, too, the one-eyed one from downstairs,

gray and white with maybe a dozen claws on each paw, the way it looks. Lastly, Lissa. My beloved. Stand next to the banker, honey. Turn a little to the left. The banker lifts his hand. He wants to grab your tit, but he doesn't dare, and he hangs there caught in the tension between wanting and holding back. Your nipples ought to be erect for this: you ought to be in heat, some. Wait, I'll do it. A tickle or two down here, yes, look at them standing up. Okay! Okay! Places, everybody! Group interaction, take one! I want each of you to project the emotion we talked about before, project just that emotion, as purely as you can. And really *live* it. Don't say to yourself, I'm posing for an artist, but say, I'm so-and-so and this is my life, this is my soul, and I'm radiating it in big chunks so he can grab it with his machine and turn it into a masterpiece. Ready? Ready? Hey, you sucks, why aren't you holding the pose? Who gave you permission to dissolve? Let's have some fucking *stability* in here! Hold it! Hold it! Hold it!

He was running as fast as he could, and the effort was killing him. A band of hot metal around his chest. His eyes ready to pop out of his head. He had turned left outside the restaurant, onto Broadway, down the dark street in long loping strides, thinking at first that he was going to get away, but then he heard the footsteps precisely matching his, a clop for his clop, on and on, and knew he wouldn't escape. Don't look back. Something may be gaining on you. Nat Hamlin running smoothly behind him, wearing the same body as his only four years younger. Shouting obscenities as he ran. What a foul

mouth he has! You'd think artists were csthetic types, more refined, and yet here comes this anthology of smut running after me. Shouting, Hey, you, Macy, you dumb cocksucker, slow down! We got a lot to talk about, you asshole! Sure we do. The first thing we talk about is which of us dies and which of us lives, and I know right away what your position is on *that*, Nat. So I'm just going to keep on running until I drop. Maybe you'll drop first, even though you're younger. With your acid and your golds and your broads tearing you down, and I've lived a clean life in the Center all these years. On. On. Almost at the bridge, now. The shining towers of Old Manhattan ahead of me. Hamlin still screaming garbage. Isn't that one of the network hovereyes up there? Sure it is! Following right along, taping the whole thing, just in case a nice sweet murder happens. Call the police, you dumb machine! Look, there's a lunatic on my ass, a convicted criminal making an illegal breakthrough to life after having been eradicated! See, see, he's got my face! Why don't you do something? I'm a network man, can't you tell? Paul Macy. Number six on the late news. I know, you're just a machine, an objective reporter, a self-contained self-propelled passive observer, but screw all that now. My life's at stake. If he catches up with me. And I can't hold out much longer. Fire in my guts. All that spaghetti in there going up and down with every stride. Liver and lights ajiggle. Oh, Christ, a hand on my shoulder. Tag, I'm it! Down on the ground. His knees on the crooks of my arms. Pinned. His lips drooling. A lunatic with my face. Get off! Get off! Get off! And he laughs. And over his

right shoulder I see the hovereye recording everything. Wonderful. *Now we bring you the final moments of Paul Macy, 39, tragically slain by his berserk alter ego. After this brief message from the makers of Acapulco Golds. Going. Going. Go—*

He was moving warily through a sleepy suburb, Queens or Staten Island, he wasn't sure which. They all looked the same. A biting January day. High-pressure system sitting on the city: not even a cloud in the sky, just a bright blank blue shield pressing down, no hint of oncoming snow, though some blackened heaps of the Christmas snowfall still lined the curb. In this sort of dryness it was difficult to believe it would ever snow again. The leafless trees like gaunt bundles of sticks, silently shouting, I am an oak, I am a maple, I am a tulip tree, and nobody listening because they all look the same. Squat two-story brick houses, reasonably far apart, on both sides of the street. The kiddies at school. The hubbies at work. A hot little wifey behind each picture window. He wasn't sure how he had found his way here. Starting out from Connecticut about half past nine in the morning, the work going all wrong, a fucking nightmare in the studio finishing in a horrid botch of a week's good labors, and then driving into the city, crossing two or maybe three bridges, ending up here. And the familiar yellow haze now swathing the temples and forehead, the steamy mist of madness. He welcomed it. There comes a time when you have to surrender to the dark forces. Yes, yes, go on, take possession of me. Nat Hamlin at your service. Call me Raskolnikov Junior. Ha, that crazy Rooshian un-

derstood something about intensity! How we boil inside. And sometimes boil over. Look at this house, now. A completely stereotyped suburban villa, maybe fifty years old, product of the buggy seventies, the creepy sixties. I shall bring some illumination into its dreary existence. By an act of will I shall intensify the life-experience of its inhabitant. See how easy it is to force the side door? Just this flimsy little latch: you insert the slicer, you waggle it, you push . . . yes. Now we go inside. Good morning, ma'am, this is the mad rapist, the Darien cocksmith, I'm peddling ecstatic terror this happy day. No, don't scream, I'm friendly. I never do unnecessary injury. I assure you that I wouldn't be here at all except for this irresistible compulsion I have. Is it my fault I'm off my hinges? A man is entitled to have a breakdown. Especially if he's a serious important artist. You ought to be thrilled to know who's going to fuck you. You're part of one of the most significant personal disintegrations in the history of western art. Like, suppose I was Van Gogh and I cut off my fucking ear right here on your kitchen linoleum? Wouldn't that give you at least a peripheral place in his biography? Well, all right, then. He had his collapse, I'm having mine. Come here, now. Let's get this tunic off you. See what kind of merchandise you're offering. Sorry, I wouldn't have ripped it if you had been cooperating. Why fight it? This can be much more meaningful for you if you just spread and give in. There. There. See, you're creaming for me! How can you deny the activity of your own Bartholin glands? This lubrication brands you whore, milady! Ah. In. In. In. That's the ticket. In and out, in and out. *Con*

amore. Allegro, allegrissimo! Wham, bam, thank you, ma'am. Zip it up. Out the door. Mad rapist strikes again. Thus we enact the latest fascinating episode in our case of personality disruption. I look so cleancut for being a psychopath. Ooops! Hey, no officer! Put that stunner down! Don't—hey, watch it—I surrender, damn you, I surrender! I'll go peacefully! I'll—go—peacefully—

Blinking furiously, soggy-headed, disoriented, he woke up. He found himself in bed, his own bed, the covers up around his chin, the lights on in the bedroom. Darkness beyond the window. The sheets cool against his skin: somebody has undressed him. From his elbow there flowed rivulets of agony. For a moment he was totally unable to recollect his last previous period of consciousness; then the incident in the people's restaurant came back to him. Walking out on Lissa. The girl calling after him. Nat Hamlin's voice whispering snakelike in his ear. Calamity. Collapse. Chaos. "Hello?" he said, voice breaking, ragged. "Is anybody here? Hello? Hello?"

Out of the other room came the girl. Framed in the doorway, naked. Even more slender than he had imagined, ribcage visible, the double ridge of muscle on the flat belly, thighs lean with a gap of an inch or two between them all the way up. The breasts still full, though. Not big boobs but nicely shaped. Triangular red bush. Her skin pink, scrubbed-looking, still moist. She's had a bath. Looks about five years younger now. "How long have you been up?" she asked him.

"Maybe half a minute. What day is this?"

"It's still the same Monday night.

No, it's Tuesday morning by now. Half past one in the morning."

"You brought me home?"

"With some help. There was this cabdriver in the people's restaurant. He carried you out. Christ, I was scared, Paul. I thought you were dead!"

"Did you try to get a doctor?"

She laughed. "At this time of night? I just sat here and watched you and hoped you'd snap out of it. You seemed to be having nightmares. Your eyeballs rolling around under the lids. I touched your mind just once, more or less an accident, and it was pretty scary, something about being chased through a dark alley." Coming over to the bed, she said, "Do you feel all right? Headache?"

"Headache, yes. Jesus."

"After a while it looked like you were just sleeping. So I took a bath, like you said I needed. You should have seen the mud come off me. But you get to feeling so shitty sometimes that you don't even bother to wash yourself, and that's where I was at. Well, that's over, now. I couldn't figure out how to work your cassette player, so I've been inside reading a book, and—"

"What happened to me in the restaurant?" he asked.

She sat on the edge of the bed. He looked at her thighs and wanted to let his hand rest on them, but it took two tries before the quivering arm would lift itself and make the ten-inch journey. Her skin was cool and smooth. He stroked her thigh, up and down, midway between knee and crotch. She said, "You got up to leave, remember? I didn't think you were going to do it, but you did, and there you were, walking away from me. The one hope

I had, walking away from me. And I knew I had hit bottom right there."

"So you called out to me."

"No," she said. "I *reached* out. With my mind."

"You didn't shout my name?" Yell at me to come back?"

"I didn't open my mouth. I reached. And I made contact. With both of you."

"Both?"

"I went right into your head, and there was someone called Paul Macy there, yes, but I hit you on another level, too, and I found Nat Hamlin. Coiled up like a spring. Hiding in the dark. I'll never forget it in a million years. My mind arcing across the gap from me to you, and finding two of you. The hidden one. Or the sleeping one, I guess."

—Sleeping is more accurate.

Hamlin's voice. Macy jumped, yanking his hand back from Lissa as though she were a stove.

"Did you hear that?" he asked.

"I didn't hear anything. But I felt a kind of twinge. A little jolt of ESP action."

"It was Hamlin, talking inside me. He said, 'Sleeping is more accurate.' What the hell's going on, Lissa?"

"He's still inside you," she said.

"No. No. That's impossible. They all said he was gone forever."

"I guess he wasn't," Lissa said. "A little bit of him left, down in the bottom of your head. Maybe you can't ever fully wipe out a personality. Like you can breed a whole new frog if you've got a single cell of the old one's body, and the new one will be identical to the old. Is that right? And so you had a couple of cells of Nat Hamlin still in your head, and I brought them

back to life by touching them. I'm sorry, Paul. It's all my fault."

"It isn't possible," he said. "It's just some hallucination I'm having."

—You wish, brother.

"He's really there," Lissa said. "I *felt* him. A presence inside you. The two of you in one head."

"No."

—No?

"I didn't mean to bring him back, Paul. I mean, I loved him, yes, but he was no good, he hurt people, he was a criminal. When they sentenced him to be wiped out, they did the right thing. I don't want him back. How can we get rid of him?"

"Don't worry about that," said Macy. "He was got rid of before. He can be got rid of again."

—Up yours, friend.

Lissa managed a brave smile. She took his hand between hers and clamped it. She looked transformed by soap and hot water, no longer the moody, embittered, disturbed waif of the restaurant. He realized that his collapse now tied her to him. She had brought him home. She had cared for him. He couldn't throw her out. She said, "Can I get you anything? A drink? A gold?"

"Not right now. I'd like to see—if I can stand up—"

"You ought to rest. A nasty shock you had."

"Nevertheless." He swung his legs over the side of the bed and tested his feet a couple of times before putting his weight on them. Precariously rising. Wobbly. Standing there showing his nakedness to her. Then a gesture that astounded him: modestly moving his hand to cover his crotch. Immediately pulling it back; he could think of six

different reasons why it was crazy to want to hide himself from her, starting with the fact that she had been this body's other owner's mistress for all those months years ago. He took a step and another, and found himself in the middle of the room, lurching a little. His left elbow was stiff and sore, which was expectable enough, considering that all his weight had landed on it. Lucky thing it wasn't broken. But there was also a curious numbness around the right side of his face. No sensation in the cheek, and his lips felt funny in the corner of his mouth. As though he'd had an anesthetic shot at the dentist. As though he'd had a stroke, maybe.

He looked at his face in the bedroom mirror. Yes, a little lopsided, the way his father had looked after *his* stroke. The mouth pulled back, the lower eyelid drooping. Macy prodded the numb part of his cheek and tried to push the lips into their proper configuration. Everything hard, like plastic flesh.

—Hi ho.

"Are *you* doing that?"

"What's the matter, Paul?"

"My face. He's holding the muscles. I can't get him to ease off."

"Oh, Christ, Paul!" Terrified.

A battle of wills. Her terror infected him. This was grisly, having the side of your face held captive by something in your brain. Like going swimming and coming up with a lobster pinching your cock. He fought back. Tugging at the muscles, trying to soften the flesh. Re-lax—re-lax—re-lax. Yes. Getting the upper hand, or whatever. Some sensation returning, now. The mouth no longer distorted. Hamlin scuttling lobsterlike into deeper recesses of his brain, letting go. Tomorrow I scoot

over to the Rehab Center and have this taken care of. A complete and exhaustive burnout of whatever vestiges of the previous self still remain. Macy glanced at the mirror again. Opening and closing his mouth, practicing big grins. The first round goes to me. He stumbled back to the bed and toppled onto it, quivering.

"You're soaked with sweat!" Lissa cried.

"It was a real struggle. The muscles."

"I watched it. Your face was writhing and grimacing. It looked like you were going crazy. Here, get back under the covers. You ought to rest. Would you like to smoke?"

"Maybe that's not such a bad idea."

She brought two golds over. Solemnly they lit up and went through the ritual of puffing, the deep drag, suck in lots of air. As the hallucinogenic smoke wandered through his lungs he imagined it traveling swiftly to his brain and befuddling the demon that Lissa's ESP had conjured into life there. Lull him back to sleep. And then, when Hamlin's groggy, drive a silver spike through his heart. Macy couldn't feel any trace of the other's presence now. For all he knew, the pot really knocked him out.

"Turn out the light," Macy said. "Get into bed with me. We'll lie here and smoke."

Her thighs cool against his. He felt feverish. The strain of the last few hours, no doubt. The tips of the golds glowing in the dark. They don't burn as fast now as they did when you had to roll your own. Time to meditate, time to contemplate. But eventually they were gone. Stubbing out the roaches. He was still unable to detect the presence of the passionate, warped

soul of Nat Hamlin within him. Pot the panacea, maybe.

He reached toward Lissa.

Moving about in the bed was difficult, on account of his sore elbow. Yet he managed.

This was the first time since he had become Paul Macy that he'd been in bed with a woman.

Oh, they'd given him a set of memories. Probably Gomez had taken care of the programming job, the little horny bastard. Dreaming up phantom lays for him. A proper heterosexual background, not even neglecting a spot of innocent pubescent homophily. Here he was with Jeanie Grosslan in the cabin at Mount Rainier. Sweet sixteen, both of them, tiny boobies cold and hard in his hands, Jeanie's long black hair all disheveled, her thighs clamped tight on his probing hand. Oh, no, no, Paul, don't, please don't, she was saying, and then she was breathing hoarsely and murmuring, Be gentle, darling, just the way they said it in the dumb romantic novels Gomez most likely had stolen all this from, Oh, be gentle with me, Paul, it's my first time. On her and in her, wham and bam. Frantic hasty poking. My first time too, but he doesn't tell her that. Jeanie Grossman gasping out her inaugural orgasm with the white bulk of Mount Rainier peering over her shoulder. But of course it hadn't happened. Not to him. To Gomez, maybe, long ago; maybe Gomez programmed his own sex life into all his reconstructs, for lack of imagination. Poor Jeanie, whoever you are, a hundred different men think they've had your cherry. And there was much more to Macy's curriculum vita. The married woman, really old, easily past thirty, who had fallen upon him

with sudden ferocity when he was seventeen years old and selling encyclopedias in the summer. Sitting next to her on the couch with all his charts outspread, saying, This is an outstanding feature, our three-dimensional visual aids presentation, and we have a choice of six bindings in beautiful decorator colors, and would you like to hear about our brand new home videotape supplement, and while he prattles she pushes the brochures off his lap and dives for his zipper and then the amazing shattering sensation of her lips engulfing him. Good old Gomez. And the nurse at Gstaad, seducing him in his huge plaster cast. And the plump German girl who liked him to use the butler's entrance. And the one with the rubber underwear and the whips. The endurance contest in Kyoto, too. The orgy on the beach at Herzlia. The dear doctor had stocked him amply with vivid and varied erotica. But what was the use? None of it was real, at least not so far as Paul Macy was concerned, and so he could no more claim it as earned experience that if he had got it all from Henry Miller and the divine marquis. He was minus any authentic lovemaking memories. So in effect he was about to lose his innocence at the age of 39. But as he fondled Lissa's slim sleek body he realized the value of having had all those imaginary episodes of the flesh implanted in him. A real virgin would be up against anatomical confusions, the mechanics of the thing, the correct angle of entry, all those problems. He at least knew where the way in was to be found. Secondhand knowledge, maybe, but useful. The Rehab Center hadn't turned him loose unable to cope. One small problem,

though. He didn't seem to be able to get it up.

Lissa was primed and ready, nicely lubricated, and his item still hung slack. Through slitwide eyes she watched him and frowned. The juices souring and curdling in her as she waited to have her vacancy filled. At last understanding the reason for the delay. Cuddling against him; her hand to the scrotum, a light tickling, very skillful. Ah. Yes. Some wind in the sails, finally. The old familiar rigidifying that he had never before experienced. Up. Up. Up. At full mast, now. Swing smoothly around, slide yourself into her. They made adjustments of their positions. She prepared herself to receive him. He was athrob, inflamed, aloft.

Then came a laugh from within and a cold devilish voice:

—Take a look at this, pal.

Blossoming on the screen of his mind the image of Lissa spread wide on another bed in another room, and himself—no, not himself but Nat Hamlin—poised above her, seizing the calves of her legs, draping them over his shoulders, now lowering himself to her with ithyphallic vitality. Nailing her. And as that inward consummation took place Macy felt his own rod lose its vehemence. Limp again; shriveled, infantile, a wee-wee. Warily he sagged against the girl. Doing it was impossible for him now. Not with *him* watching. I carry my own audience in my head. Hamlin, still roaring with turbulent inner laughter, was sending up scene after scene out of his no doubt actual experience, coupling with Lissa in this position, in that one, Lissa on top, Lissa down on her knees being had dogwise, the whole copulatory biography of their long-ago liaison, and

Macy, helpless, his phantom images of Jeanie Grossman and the encyclopedia woman swept away by this gushing incursion of reality, lay stunned and sobbing and impotent waiting for Hamlin to stop tormenting him. Lissa didn't seem to understand what was happening, only that Macy had lost his hard at a critical moment and was plain upset about it. Her long thin arms cradled him affectionately. "It's all right," she whispered. "You've been under a terrible strain, and anyway that kind of thing can happen to anybody. It'll be better later. Just lie here and rest. It doesn't matter. It's all right. It's all right." Pressing his cheek against her breast. "Try to get some sleep," she said. He nodded. Closing his eyes, trying to relax. Out of the darkness Hamlin's voice:

—That was just to let you know I'm still here.

FIVE

SOMETIME DURING THE NIGHT there must have been a flow of strength from her to him, for he had fallen asleep being comforted by her, and he was awakened by the sounds of her sobs. The room very dark: morning some hours away, yet he felt as though he'd had enough sleep. Lissa had her back to him, her bony spine pressing into his chest; she was curled up knees to breasts, making snuffling sounds, and every thirty seconds or so a great racking open-mouthed bed-shaking sob came out of her. Before he could tend to her he had to survey the condition of his own head. All seemed well. He was rested and loose. There was a deli-

cious sense of aloneness between his ears. When he was in contact with Hamlin he felt inwardly cluttered, as though bales of barbed wire were coming unraveled in his skull. None of that now. The alter ego was sleeping, maybe, or at any rate busy in some other realm. Macy put his hand lightly on Lissa's bare shoulder and called her name. She went on sobbing. He shook her gently.

"What?" she said, sounding foggy and far away.

"Tell me what the trouble is."

A long silence. No reply. Had she gone back to sleep? Had she ever been awake?

"Lissa? Lissa, what's the trouble?"

"Trouble?"

"You've been crying."

"It's all a bad dream," she said, and he realized that she was still asleep. She pulled away from him, getting even more tightly into the fetal position. Heaving a terrible sigh. Sounds of weeping. He wrapped himself around her, thighs to her buttocks, his lips just above her ear. Her skin was cold. She was shivering. "Chasing me," she murmured. "Ten arms, like some kind of octopus."

"Wake up," he said. "It'll all go away if you wake up."

"Why are you so sure?"

And she sent him her dream, nicely wrapped. Popping from her mind to his, clicking smartly into place like a cassette. Jesus. A lunar landscape of crumbling concrete, thousands of miles wide, a million cracks and furrows and fissures. Not a building, not a tree, not a shrub in sight, only this gray-white plateau of flat ruinous stony pavement covering the universe. From above a fierce white light plays on the concrete,

so that the upthrust rims of the fissure-lines cast long harsh shadows. A frosty wind blowing. Footsteps. Lissa appears from the right, naked, breathless, running hard, her hair streaming behind her, streaming *into* the wind. Her pale white skin is marked by dozens of circular red eicatrices, suction-marks. And now her pursuer thunders after her. Nat Hamlin, yes, wearing his bland even-featured Anglo-Saxon face, but he has eight, ten, a dozen curling tentacles coming out of his shoulders, tentacles equipped with big ridged sucker-cups. Not hard to tell where Lissa got the red marks on her body. His feet are frog-flippers the size of snowshoes. Thromp! Thromp! Thromp! He comes flapping toward her at an incredible speed. And then there are the voices. People are saying things about her in Sanskrit, in Hungarian, in Basque, in Hopi, in Turkish. Unfavorable comments about her breasts. Snide remarks about her unshaven armpits. A cutting reference to a mole on her left hind cheek. They are laughing at her in Bengali. They are offering her perversions in Polish. She hears everything. She understands everything. Hamlin now has split in two, a double pursuer, one of him somehow coming from the other side of her, and she is trapped between them. Closer . . . closer . . . impaling her fore and aft . . . she screams . . .

I reject this dream, Macy thought. It isn't a necessary nightmare. To hell with it.

"Wake up," he said again, loudly.

Waking her wasn't so easy. She was hovering in a peculiar borderline state, almost a hypnotic trance, in which she was able to hear him and even give him rational answers without, however,

being plugged into the waking world in any meaningful way. Lost in her hallucinatory horrors. He switched on the light. Half past four in the morning. He'd been sleeping only about two hours, then. Seemed like a full night. Pulling her to a sitting position, he opened her eyes with his thumbs. She stared bleakly at him. Eyes like mirrors, seeing nothing. "Lissa? Jesus. Lissa, *snap out of it!*" Waves of terror rippling across her face. Her sharp little elbows digging hard into her sides, fists balled and held tight to her clavicles. Still sobbing, a quick panicky inhaling and exhaling. Macy hauled her from the bed and frogmarched her into the bathroom. His palm touching the shower control. A computerized cascade of chilly water. Get under, girl. A shriek. As though he were flaying her. But she was awake now.

"My God," she said. "I was on some other planet."

"I know. I know."

"My head's all full of it. A million square miles of cracked pavement. I still see it. And that light shining overhead, such a fucking bright light. And those tentacles."

"They're gone now," he said.

"No. They came out of my head, didn't they? They're still in there, the way Nat Hamlin's in you. I'm going crazy, Paul, isn't that obvious? Christ, hold tight to me. Maybe the octopus is real and this is the dream." Her teeth were chattering. He wrapped a towel around her and guided her back to the bedroom. Her cheeks felt hot. A high fever raging in her. "I just want to hide somewhere," she said. "To disappear into my own brain, you understand what I mean? To get away into some inner world where nobody can find me.

Where I can't hear the voices." She slithered under the covers, pulling the blankets over her head. A thick mound in the bed, a lump, like a rabbit in a snake's belly. From underneath came muffled words. "What's going to happen to us, Paul? We're both crazy." Macy got in beside her, and abruptly she turned to him with such fantastic ferocious passion that the breath was knocked from him. Grappling with him, knotting her arms and legs about his. Her belly pushing at his. Her pubic hone jabbing him painfully. Lissa clutching him as if she wanted to devour him. As a boy living in Seattle in the life he hadn't lived, he had watched a starfish in a tide-pool going to work on a clam, pulling its shell open with its suction-cups, then turning itself inside out so that its stomach might go forth and ingest. He thought of that now as Lissa writhed against him. Waiting for something long and slimy to extrude from her slit and begin digesting him. Thank you, Dr. Gomez, for that lovely image. Do you hate women too, you mindfucking bastard? "Paul," she murmured. "Paul. Paul. Paul." Rhythmic exclamations. To his surprise he found himself stiffening despite everything, and in a single swift gesture he slipped into her. She was hot and wet. As he speared her he expected Hamlin to surface and interfere with things again, but this time he was allowed the privacy of his genitals. Lissa cried out almost immediately. Her spasms were still going on when his began, a million and a quarter years later.

At half past seven he woke again. Lissa seemed to be sleeping soundly. Hamlin quiescent. He showered and

went into the little kitchen-cum-dinette. Picked up the phone, tapped out the delayed-message code, and instructed it to call the network at nine to say that he was sick and wouldn't be coming in. Then he called the Rehab Center and arranged for today's post-therapy session to be moved up from four in the afternoon to nine in the morning. He didn't want to lose any time getting the Hamlin problem dealt with. "Will you hold?" the Center's computer asked him, and he held, and two or three minutes later the machine came back to him and said, "I've checked Dr. Ianuzzi's schedule, Mr. Macy, and it will be possible for her to see you at nine today." The computer's face, on the telephone screen, was that of an efficient, good-looking brunette. "Fine," Macy said, winking at her. He peered into the bedroom. Lissa lay face down, one arm dangling to the floor. Snoring faintly. Well, she'd had a hard night. He programmed breakfast for himself.

Macy wondered if Dr. Gomez would be at the Center today. He wanted to see the look on the little Mex's face when he showed up with a supposedly obliterated identity surfacing in his brain. Macy could still hear the doctor's cocky spiel. "If I tell you Hamlin is eradicated, it's because I *know* Hamlin is eradicated." Sure. "I'm not just being a bullheaded bastard." No, of course not. "Nat Hamlin doesn't exist any more." You tell it, baby. "Hamlin exists only as an abstract concept." Right on, sweetheart. How was Gomez going to explain any of last night's events? I hope Hamlin spits right in his goddamn face. With my mouth.

He thought he had a good idea what had brought Hamlin back to life. Who. Lissa, was who. This telepathy business

of hers had somehow managed to nudge the expelled ego out of limbo and give him at least a partial grip on his former body. Looking back over his relationship with Lissa, Macy saw the pattern clearly. That first day, two weeks ago exactly, when she'd collided with him on the street, that first moment of recognition, Lissa refusing to honor his Rehab badge and calling him by Nat Hamlin's name: right then, at the beginning, he'd felt a stabbing pain, as if he were Hamlin and back at the Center having his past uprooted. And then, a few minutes later, same incident, when Lissa had leaned close and grabbed his wrist: that feeling of heat in his brain, that sense of intrusion. Clearly it was her ESP stirring things up in him. Producing an instant of confusion, of double identity, when he wasn't sure whether he was Hamlin or Macy. Probably that was the moment at which Hamlin's return to conscious existence was stimulated. When I got that vision of myself in Hamlin's studio, Lissa posing for me. And thought I was having a heart attack on the street.

And then? Later the same day, when I almost passed out in front of Harold Griswold's Hamlin sculpture, that must have been Hamlin giving a wild whoop and a leap inside me at the sight of something familiar. That night I had the first of my pursuit dreams. Hamlin loose in my head, and chasing me. Next? When Lissa sent the letter threatening suicide, and I met her on the street. Good Christ, was that only last night? And I walked up to her and there was that doubleness again, the nausea, the confusion. No doubt she had given Hamlin another little nudge. Lastly, when I tried to leave her in the

restaurant, and she cried out for me to come back. The sheer mental voltage of that must have been the clincher, awakening Hamlin fully, giving him a chance to jump to the conscious level. I was so stunned by Lissa's telepathic scream that Hamlin was able to grab some of the cerebral centers and start talking to me. Even to seize the facial muscles on the right side, for a little while. He doesn't have solid control of anything, not for long, he holds on a while and slips away, but he's there. Lissa's fault. Of course she didn't intend to. A weird telepathic accident, is all. Or maybe not so accidental. It was Hamlin she loved; I'm just a stranger in his body. Suppose this is her way of getting rid of me and helping him come back.

No.

He didn't want to believe that. She hadn't meant to yank Hamlin into consciousness. All the same, she was responsible. Now I've got to get him removed again. Anguish and turmoil, most likely. After which I better not fool around with Lissa. Self-preservation has to come before concern for others, right? Out she goes.

The Rehab Center was just across the Connecticut line in Greenwich. Ten minutes by long-hop gravity tube from Manhattan North. Macy took the up-town shuttle to the nearest loading point for the tube. A gray, misty morning, more like late autumn than like late spring. Taut-faced commuters running this way and that. Most of them going the other way, thank God. They kept bumping into him. Giving him funny stares and going on. For over a week now he had been free of his obsession that people were staring

at him, but this morning it returned. The Rehab badge seemed like a beacon drawing all eyes. Announcing: Here walks a former sinner. Doer of dreadful deeds! Behind this bland mask lurks the purified brain of a famous criminal. Do you recognize him? Do you remember the news stories? Go up close, take a good look, enlarge your life-experience through a moment of proximity with somebody who has been a household word. Guaranteed not to harm you. Guaranteed to be regenerated and redeemed from sin. He walks, he talks, he suffers like 'an ordinary human being! See the former monster! See! See! See!

"Greenwich," Macy said huskily to the ticket-scanner, and tapped out his account number. From the slot came a plastic ticket with thin golden filaments embedded in it. Clutching it tightly, Macy made his way to the loading gate. The doors of the train were open. Plenty of seats inside. He found one next to the wall. No windows in here. People drifting aboard. He sat passively, thinking as little as possible. Floating in here. Just as the train itself, within its tube, floated in a larger tube on a two-foot-deep cushion of water. "All aboard," the computer voice calls. The pressure-tight door sliding shut. We are sealed within. Gliding forward, through the airlock. The valve swinging open. Near-vacuum in front of the train, full pressure behind: the train goes squirting into the tube. Very clever. Little sensation of motion, because of the dynamic flotation system and the sleek roller-bearing wheels. Onward, zooming silently eastward, driven by cunning pneumatic forces, the air to the train's rear gradually becoming more tenuous,

the air in front undergoing steady compression. Ultimately the air in front will be our cushion for deceleration. Meanwhile gravity also drives us as we swoop through a gently sloping tunnel. To the midpoint, where we will begin to rise and slow. How shrewd these engineers are. If I could only ride the tube all day, coasting from here to there and back again at a lovely 300 mph. The ecstasies of free fall. Or almost free. Macy sat with eyes closed. Not a twitch out of Hamlin. Stay hidden, you murderous bastard. Stay hidden.

He didn't understand how it was possible for Hamlin to have come back. At the Center he had picked up a good working knowledge of the Rehab process, and from what he knew of it he couldn't see any chance for the spontaneous or evoked resurrection of an obliterated identity. What's identity, after all, if not just the sum of all the programming we've received since the initial obstetrical slap on the rear? They pump into us a name, a set of kinship relations, a structural outlook toward society, and a succession of life-experiences. And after a while feedback mechanisms come into play, so that what we've already become directs our choice of further shaping experiences, thereby reinforcing the contours of the existing self, creating the attitudes and responses that we and others consider "typical" of that self. Fine. And this accumulation of events and attitudes is engraved on the brain, first in the form of electrical impulses and patterns, then, as short-term memories are accepted for long-term storage, in the form of chains of complex molecules, registering in the chemical structure of the brain's cells. And so: to undo the

identity-creating process, one merely undoes the electrochemical patterns by which the identity is recorded. A little electronic scrambling, first, to inhibit synapse transmission and rearrange the way the electrons jump in the brain. Then, when defenses are down, start the chemical attack. A shot of acetylcholine terminase to interfere with short-term memory fixation. One of the puromycin derivatives to wash out the involuted chains of ribonucleic acid, brain-RNA, that keep memories permanently inscribed in the brain. Flush the system with amnesifacient drugs, and presto! The web of experiences and attitudes is wiped away, leaving the body a *tabula rasa*, a blank sheet, without identity, without soul, without memory. So, then: feed in a new identity, any identity you like. Building takes longer than destroying, naturally. You start with a vacant hulk that has certain basic motor reactions left and nothing else: it knows how to tie its shoelaces, how to blow its nose, how to make articulate sounds. Unless the wipeout job has been done with excessive zeal, it can even speak, read, and write, though probably on a six-year-old level. Now give it a name. Using nifty hypnagogic techniques, feed it its new biography: here is where you went to school, this is your mother, this is your father, these were your childhood friends, these were your hobbies. It doesn't have to be crystalline in its consistency; most of our memories are mush anyway, out of which a bright strand projects here and there. Stuff the reconstruct with enough of a past so he won't feel disembodied. Then train him for adult life: give him some job skills, social graces, remind him what sex is all about, et cetera, et ce-

tera. The peripheral stuff, reading and writing and language, comes back faster than you'd imagine. But the old identity *never* comes back, because it's been hit by fifty megatons of fragmentation bombs, it's been totally smashed. Right down on the cellular level, everything making up that identity has been sluiced away by the clever drugs. It's gone.

Unless. Somehow. Skulking in the cellular recesses, traces of the old self manage to remain, like scum on a pond, a mere film of demolished identity, and from this film, given the right circumstances, the old self can rebuild itself and take command of its body. What are the right circumstances? None, if you listen to Gomez and Co. No recorded case of an identity reestablishing itself after a court-ordered eradication has been carried out. But how many reconstructs have ever been exposed to ESP? The full blast of a telepath reaching out toward old and new identities simultaneously? It's a statistical problem. There are x number of reconstructs walking around today. And y number of telepaths. x is a very small number and y is even smaller than that. So what are the odds against an x meeting a y ? So big, apparently, that this is the first time it's ever happened. And now look. That psychopathic fucker Hamlin crawling around loose in my brain. Why mine?

"Greenwich," said the voice of the computer, and the train slid placidly to a halt on its cushion of compressed air.

The Rehab Center was north of the city, in the old estate district, which through inspired and desperate zoning arrangements had managed to resist

the grinding glacier of population pressures which had devastated most of suburbia. Several acts of reconstruction and rehabilitation had been performed on the Center itself. The main building, a gray pseudo-Tudor stone pile three stories high, with groined stockbroker-Gothic ceilings and leaded-glass windows, had been a private residence in the middle twentieth century, the mansion of some old robber baron, a speculator in energy options. In the end the speculator had outsmarted himself and gone into bankruptcy; the big house then had been transformed into the headquarters of a therapy-cult that relied a good deal on year-round nudity, and it was in this era that the five plastic geodesic domes had been erected, forming a giant pentagram around the main building, to serve as wintertime solaria. Recriminations and lawsuits did the cult in within five years, and the place became an avant-garde secondary school, where the scions of the Connecticut gentry took courses in copulatory gymnastics, polarity traumas, and social relativity. The various minor outbuildings, with many ingenious electronic facilities, were added at this time. The school collapsed before it had produced its first graduating class, and the county, taking possession of the premises for nonpayment of realty taxes, speedily turned it into the first Rehab Center in the western half of the state in order to qualify for the Federal matching-funds grant then being offered; the national government, eager to get the Rehab program off to a fast start, was throwing its meager resources around quite grandly then. As one rode up the thousand-yard-long driveway leading to the main



building, one could behold all the discrete strata of construction marking the epochs of the Center's past, and, if one were imaginatively inclined, one might envision the old speculator placing phonecalls from poolside, the health fanatics toasting in the solarium, the youthful scholars elaborately fornicating on the lawn, all at once, while through the leafy glades wandered today's candidates for personality rehabilitation, smiling blankly as voices out of earphones purred their pasts to them.

Macy saw none of these things today, not even the driveway. For, as he emerged from the tube station in downtown Greenwich and looked about for an autotaxi to take him up to the Center, he felt a sensation much like that of a hatchet landing between his shoulderblades, and toppled forward, dazed and retching, sprawling to the pavement. For some moments he lay half-conscious on the elegant blue and white terrazzo tiling of the station entrance. Then, recovering somewhat, he managed to scramble up until he crouched on hands and knees, like a tipsy sprinter awaiting the starter's gun. More than that he could not do. Rising to a standing position was beyond him now. Flushed, sweating, stricken, he waited for his strength to return and hoped someone would help him up. No one did. The commuters obligingly parted their ranks and flowed by him to either side. A boulder in a stream. No one offers to assist a boulder. Perhaps they have a lot of epileptics in Greenwich. Can't let yourself get worked up over one of *those*. Damned troublemakers always flopping on their faces, chewing on their tongues: how's a man going to get to work on time

if he stops for them every morning? Macy listened to time tolling in his head. One minute, two, three. What had happened? This was the second time in the last eighteen hours that he'd been clubbed down from within. *Hamlin?*

—You bet your ass.

What did you do to me?

—Gave you a leetle twitch in the autonomic nervous system. I'm sitting right here looking at it. A bunch of ropes and cords, the most complicated frigging mess you could imagine. I just reached out and went *plink*.

Another shaft of pain between the shoulderblades.

Stop it, Macy said. Jesus, why are you doing that?

—Self-preservation. Like you said a little while ago, self-preservation has to come before concern for others, right?

Can you hear all my thoughts?

—Enough of them. Enough to know when I'm being threatened.

Threatened?

—Sure. Where were you heading when I knocked you off your feet?

The Rehab Center. Macy admitted.

—That's right. And what were you going to do there?

I was going for my weekly post-therapy therapy session.

—Like shit you were. You were going to tell the doctors that I had come back to life.

And if I was?

—Don't try to play innocent. You were going to have them blot me out again, right? Right, Macy?

Well—

—Admit it!

Macy, crouching on the shining tiles, attempted to call for help. A soft mew-

ing sound came from him. The commuters continued to stream past. A flotilla of attache cases and portable terminals. Please. Please. Help me.

From Hamlin, a second time:

—Admit it!

Let me alone.

Macy felt a sudden explosion of agony behind his breastbone. As if a hand had clasped itself about his heart for a quick powerful squeeze. Setting the valves aflap, emptying the ventricles, pinching the aorta.

—I'm learning my way around in here, pal. I can do all kinds of things today that I couldn't swing yesterday. Like tickling your heart. Isn't that a lovely sensation? Now, suppose you tell me why you were in such a hurry to get to the Rehab Center, and it better be the right answer.

To have you obliterated again, Macy confessed miserably.

—Yes. Yes. The dirty truth will out! You were conspiring in my murder, weren't you? I never murdered anybody in my life, you understand, I merely took a few liberties with my prick, and nevertheless the state was pleased to order my death—

Your rehabilitation, said Macy.

—My death, Hamlin shot back at him, giving him a tug on the right triceps by way of emphasis. —They killed me and put somebody else in my body, only I came back to life, and you were going to have them kill me again. We don't need to debate the semantics of the point. Stand up, Macy.

Macy cautiously tested his strength and found that his legs now would support him. He rose very slowly, feeling immensely fragile. A few tottering steps. Knees shaking. Skin clammy. Dryness in the throat.

—Now, friend, we have to get something understood. You aren't going to go to the Rehab Center today. You aren't going to go there at all, ever again, because the Center is a dangerous place for me, and so in order to keep you away I'll have to make it a dangerous place for you too. Let me give you just a taste of what will happen to you if you come within five miles of a Rehab Center. Just a taste.

Again, the hand tightening around his heart. But no mere squeeze this time. A fierce griping full-strength clench. It knocked Macy down once more. Gradually the inner grasp was relaxed, but it left him nauseated and feeble, and a terrible thunder reverberated in his chest. Cheek to the tile, he kicked his legs in a frenzy of pain. This time his anguish was too visible to be ignored, and he was seized by passersby and hoisted to his feet.

"You okay? Some kind of fit?"

"Please—if I could just sit down somewhere—"

"You need a doctor?"

"It's only a little chest spasm—I've had them before—"

They took him inside. A bench in the waiting-room. Advert globes floating in the air. Blinking their messages into his face. He was numb. Impossible even to think. A constant stream of people flowing by. Trains arriving, departing. Voices. Colors. After a while, his strength returned.

—If you try to go back for reconditioning, Macy, that's what I'll do to you, and not just a little squeeze. If necessary I'll shut off your heart altogether. I can do it. I see where the nerve connections are now.

But then you'll die too, Macy said.

—That's true. If it's necessary for me

to interrupt the life-processes of this body that we're sharing, we'll both die. So what? I don't expect you to commit suicide for the sake of getting rid of me. But I'm perfectly prepared to commit suicide for the sake of *keeping* you from getting rid of me, because I've got no choice. I'm a dead man anyway if you get inside a Rehab Center. So I offer you the ultimate threat. Keep away, or else. It wouldn't be smart of you to call my bluff. For both our sakes, don't.

I'm supposed to show up for weekly post-therapy sessions, though.

—Skip them.

It's part of the court decree. If I don't show up, they're likely to issue a warrant for me.

—We'll worry about that when the time comes. Meanwhile forget about therapy sessions.

But we can't share a body, Macy protested. It's insanity. There's no room for two of us.

Don't worry about that now, either. We'll work something out. For the time being we're sharing, and you fucking well better accept the idea. Now get yourself aboard a city-bound train. Put some distance between me and that Center.

SIX

HOME AGAIN, mid-morning. His head throbbing. Not a peep out of Hamlin all the way back. The apartment seemed to have undergone a strange transformation in the two hours of his absence: previously a neutral place, wholly lacking emotional connotations, and now an alien and sinister cell, cramped and repellent. The flat's dark

new tone astonished him. Its mysterious autumnal resonances. Its shadows where no shadows had been. Nothing had changed in it, really. Lissa hadn't moved any furniture around or sprayed the walls a different color. And yet. And yet, how frightening it all looked now. How out of place he felt in it. That L-shaped bedroom, low ceiling, narrow bed jammed up against flimsy wall, old-fashioned light-fixture dangling, bilious green paint, cheap smeary Picasso prints, slit of a window revealing splotchy May sunshine and two scraggly trees across the street—how ugly it looked, how coarse, how constricted, how squashed! Did people really live in places like this? Tiny bathroom, slick pink tiles. Not even an ultrasonic cleanser, just archaic sink and tub and crapper. A microscopic kitchen-dinette affair, everything jammed together, table, freezer, telephone screen, disposal unit, stove. At least a tiny buzz-cleanser for the dirty dishes. A sitting-room, cheap red plastic couch, some books, cassettes, a video unit. A prison for the soul. Our impoverished century: this is the best we can afford for human beings, after our long orgies of waste and destruction. For the last couple of weeks, this apartment had been his refuge, his harbor, his hermitage; if he thought about it at all, which he doubted, it had been in a friendly way. Why did it turn him off now? After a moment, he believed he knew. Hamlin's sensibility now underlay his own. The sculptor's sophisticated perceptions bleeding through to the Macy levels of their shared mind. Hamlin's loathing for the apartment tinged Macy's view of it. To Hamlin the proportions were wrong, the ambiance vile, the psycho-

logical texture of the place slimy and grimy, the inner environmental color a nasty one. And I feel all that. Macy shivered. He visualized Hamlin as a kind of abscess in his brain, a pocket of pus, inaccessible, destructive.

Lissa was still in bed. That bothered him. The Protestant ethic: sleeping late equals rejection of life. But she wasn't asleep. Stirring lazily, sitting up, knuckles to eyes. A purring yawn. "Everything taken care of?" she asked.

"No."

"What happened?"

He told her about the episode at the Greenwich terminal. Writhing on the blue and white terrazzo with fire in his chest. Hamlin playfully strumming the harp of his autonomic nervous system. Lissa listened, big-eyed, somber-faced, and said finally, "What are you going to do?"

"I haven't any idea."

"But that's hideous. Having him inside you like a parasite. A crab hiding in your head. Like a case of brain cancer. Look, maybe if I call the Rehab Center—"

A warning twinge from Hamlin, deep down.

"No," Macy said.

"I could tell them what's happened. Maybe this has happened before. Maybe they know some way to deal with him without risk to you."

"The moment they tried anything," he said, "Hamlin would stop my heartbeat. I know that."

"But if there's some drug that might knock him out—I could slip it to you somehow—"

"He's listening right now, Lissa. Don't you think he'll be on guard constantly? He may not even need to sleep. We can't take chances."

"But how can you go on with somebody else inside your head, trying to take you over?"

Macy pondered that one. "What makes you think he's trying to take me over?"

"Isn't it obvious? He wants his body back. He'll try to cut you down, one block of nerves at a time, until there's nothing left of you at all. He'll push you out. And then he'll be Nat Hamlin again."

"He just said he wanted to share the body with me," Macy muttered.

"Will he stop there? Why should he?"

"But Nat Hamlin's a proscribed criminal. Legally he doesn't even exist any more. If he tried to return to life—"

"Oh, he'd go on using the Macy identity," Lissa said. "Only he'd take up sculpting again, in another country, maybe. He'd look up his old friends. He'd be the old Hamlin, except his passport would say Macy, and—" She halted. "He'd look up his old friends," she repeated. She seemed to be examining the idea from various angles. "Old friends such as me."

"Yes. You." In a tone that he recognized as unpleasant, but which he found impossible to alter, Macy said, "He could even marry you. As he was originally planning to do."

"His wife is still alive, I'm sure."

"That marriage was legally dissolved at the time he was sentenced," Macy said. "It's automatic. They cut all ties. Officially, he wouldn't be Hamlin even if he took over. He'd be Macy, and Macy is single. There you are, Lissa." The edge of cruelty coming into his voice again. "You'd finally get to be his wife. What you've always wanted."

She shook her head. "I don't want

it any more."

"You said you loved him."

"I once did love him. But I told you, that's all dead now. The things he did. The crimes. The rapes."

"The first time we met," said Macy heavily, "when you were still insisting on calling me Nat, you made a point of saying you were still in love with me. The old me. *Him*. You said it two or three times. Talking about how much you missed him. Refusing to believe that there was somebody new living behind his face."

"You misunderstand," she said. "I felt so lonely. So fucking *lost*. And all of a sudden I was standing next to somebody I knew, somebody out of the past—I just wanted help, I had to talk to him—I mean, I crashed right into you in the street, was I supposed to walk away and not even say hello?"

"You saw my Rehab badge and you ignored it."

"I didn't see it at all."

"You must have blanked it out deliberately. You knew Nat Hamlin had been put away for Rehab."

"You're shouting at me."

"I'm sorry. I can't help it. I'm tense as hell, Lissa. Look, so you saw somebody in the street and you thought he was Nat Hamlin, so you said hello, but did you have to tell him you were still in love with him, too?"

"I didn't mean it."

"You said it."

"What else could I do?" she asked. Her voice was shrill now. "Stand there and say, Hello, you look like Nat Hamlin who I used to love, and of course I don't love him any more and in any case he's been wiped out but since you look just like him I'll fall in love with you instead, so let's go

home and ball a little? How could I say that? But I couldn't let you just vanish without saying something to you. I was making a stab at the past, trying to catch it, trying to bring it back. The beautiful past, before the hellish part started. And you were my only link to that, Paul, and I was excited, and I said Nat, Nat, I talked about being in love—"

"Exactly. You called me Nat, and said you were still in love with—"

"Why are you doing this to me, Paul?"

"Doing what?"

"Chewing on me. Shouting. All these questions."

"I'm trying to find out which one of us you're really loyal to. Hamlin or me. Which side you're going to take when the struggle for this body gets rough."

She said, "You aren't trying to find out any such thing. You just want to hurt me."

"Why should I want to—"

"How would I know? Because you blame me for bringing him back to life, maybe. Because you hate me for having loved him once. Because he's sitting inside you right now forcing you to hurt me. I don't know. Christ, I don't know at all. Only why do you need to find out where my loyalty is? Didn't I tell you last night that I didn't want him coming back? Didn't I offer to call the Rehab Center just now?"

"Yes. Yes."

"So how could I possibly be on his side? I want him to be wiped out. I want him gone forever. I want—oh, Christ—" She halted suddenly. Leaping from the bed as though stung, arms and legs flying stiffly out from her torso. Turning toward him. Her face

contorted, the eyes bulging, the mouth a rigid hole, the muscles of her throat bunched and jutting. From her lips a bizarre clotted baritone, hoarse and unfocused, like the blunt blurtings of a deaf mute, no words intelligible: "*Mfss. Shlrrm. Skk-kk. Vshh. Vshh. Vshh.*" A terrible gargling cry, all the more horrible because of the deep masculine tone in which it was delivered. She lurched around the room, stumbling into things, clawing at the air. A plain case of demonic possession. What rides her? "*Grkk. Lll. Llll. Pkd-dd.*" Eyes wild, pleading. Bare breasts heaving wildly. A sheen of sweat on her skin. Macy rushed toward her, trying to embrace her, calm her, ease her back to the bed. She pivoted like a robot and her arm crashed across his chest, doubling him up in gasps. When he looked at her again her face was scarlet with strain and her mouth was open to the full reach of her jaws, beyond it, perhaps. The wild gargling sounds still erupted from her, and her eyes registered total horror and despair. Once again Macy tried to seize her. This time successfully. Muscles leaping and churning and twitching all over her spare naked form. He forced her down on the bed and covered her with his body, hands gripping her wrists, knees imprisoning her thighs. A sour smell of sweat rising from her, bad sweat, fear-sweat. Some kind of epileptic fit? Epilepsy was much on his mind this morning. In a low urgent voice he talked to her, tried to soothe her, to reach her somehow. More baritone drivel coming out of her in halting husky bleeps of thick noise. The static of the soul. "Lissa?" he said. "Lissa, can you hear me? Try to go limp. Let all your muscles hang loose." Easier

said than done. She still twitched. While in the midst of this he felt a hot sensation at the base of his skull, as of an auger drilling into him. Or drilling toward the outside from the soft center of his brain. Something jumped frantically within his mouth and it was a moment before he realized that it was his tongue, jerking itself crazily backward toward his gullet. "*Vshh. Vshh. Pkd-dd. Slrr. Msss.*" The sounds not from Lissa this time. From him.

Lying there congealed and coagulated on top of Lissa, he understood perfectly what was happening. Nat Hamlin, having conserved his strength for a couple of hours, was trying to achieve a takeover of a new level of their shared brain. Specifically Hamlin was attempting to grab Macy's speech centers. Macy knew that that would mark the start of his own obliteration; once Hamlin had control of the voice, it would be *his* thoughts, not Macy's, that their body would express. Hamlin would have access to the external world and Macy would be shut inside. But at the moment Hamlin wasn't doing too well. He had grabbed the neural sectors governing speech, only his grasp was incomplete, and the best he could manage were these bursts of nonsense. Somehow, Macy realized, Lissa had become entangled in the battle before he himself had known it was going on. Her brain hooked into his; Hamlin speaking, or trying to, through her mouth. A microphoning effect of some kind. Now they were both doing it, the two of them bellowing like demented seals. Feeding hour at the zoo. Is this where it ends? Does Hamlin take over from me now? No. No. Fight back. Stop him here and drive him into a corner.

How, though?

The way you did last night, when he had hold of the side of your mouth. Pry him loose. Through sheer strength of concentration, break his grip.

Macy tried to visualize the interior of his brain. Telling himself, This is where Hamlin lives, this pocket of gunk, and these are the pathways he's been building to other parts of my brain, and this is the place he's attacking now. It was a purely imaginary construct, but it would serve for the moment. Try to visualize the speech centers themselves. Say, row upon row of tight-strung pink cords, a kind of piano deal, with a switchboard attached. Hamlin at the switchboard, plugging things in, looking for the right connection; and the pink cords, all ajangle, giving off weird groaning noises. Come up behind him. Grab his arms. He isn't any stronger than you are. Pull him away, knock him on his ass. Jump on him. Careful, don't smash any of the machinery. You'll need it when this is over. Just hang on to him. Stay on top. Pin him, pin him, pin him! Good! Smash his head against the floor a couple of times! Okay, the floor's spongy, it gives a little, smash him anyway. Stun him. Right. Now start hauling him the hell out of there. Heavy fucker, isn't he? One hundred ninety pounds, same as you. Heave. Heave. Heave. Into this musty corridor. A hot humid smell coming out of it. Things must be rotting in there. In with him! Down the chute! Slam the door. There. Easier than you expected, eh? All it takes is some mental energy. Perseverance. You can relax now. Catch your breath. Hey, Jesus, what's this? He must have come to, in there. Hammering on the other side of the

door. Starting to push it open. Wow, you can't let him do that. Hold it closed! Push . . . push . . . push . . . a stalemate. He can't get it open any further, you can't close it that last crack. *Push.* He's pushing back. *Push. Push.* Bear down. Oh, Jesus. There! It's closed again. All right, keep your shoulder to the door, hold it tight. The bear's locked in his cave; you don't want him coming out again. Now fasten the door. With what? Slip a bolt in place, dodo. But there isn't a bolt. Sure there is. This is your mind, your own fucking mind, can't you use a little imagination? Invent a bolt! Like that. Fine. Now ram it home. In the slot. In. In. There. Okay, step back. See if he can break out. Be ready to clobber him if he does. He's banging on the door. Throwing himself against it. But the bolt holds. It holds. Good deal. Let's check out the machinery, now. Make sure he didn't screw it up. Loud and clear, let's hear it:

"My name is Paul Macy."

Good. Nice to hear some sense out of your mouth again. Keep going.

"I was born in Idaho Falls, Idaho, on the 12th of March, 1972. My father was a propulsion engineer and my mother was a schoolteacher."

Voice production generally okay. A little rusty around the edges, a little froggy in the lower frequencies, but that's only to be expected, the way he was abusing your pipes. It'll clear up fast, most likely.

You win this round, Macy.

Slowly, shakily, he rose from the bed. Lissa still lay there, looking crumpled and flattened. She didn't move. Her face had resumed its normal appearance. Her eyes were open. No glow in them. A sullen, absent expression.

"Are you all right?" he asked.

No response. Off in another galaxy somewhere.

"Lissa? Are you okay?"

Staring blankly at him, she said, "Do you give a shit if I am?" Her voice was as hoarse as his.

"What kind of question is that?"

"You were really letting me have it before all the fireworks started," she said. "Telling me you suspected I was on his side, and a lot of other crap. If I had any sense I'd get the hell away from you, fast. I don't need to be pushed around like that." She stood up, huddling her arms against her sides, looking more vulnerable than ever. The blue streaks of veins visible in her breasts. Stretch-marks in the skin of her hips, showing where she had lost weight lately. Quick angry motions. Snatching at her clothes, throwing things on. A blouse, a tunic. She said, "That was him, wasn't it? Hamlin? Trying to talk through my voice?"

"And then through mine, yes."

"Where did he go?"

"I beat him down. I made him let go."

"Hurray for you." Tonelessly. "My hero. You see my sandals anywhere?"

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"This is a crazyhouse. I'm worse off here than I was alone. I'm going home."

"No," he said. He remembered that he had decided, only this dawn, to sever her from his life once the Rehab Center had plucked the resurgent Nat Hamlin from his brain. Telling himself then that it was too dangerous to have her around him, because of her gift, her curse, whatever it was that had awakened Hamlin. Out she goes, he had decided. Self-preservation first and

always. Out she goes. How hollow that sounded to him now. He still had Hamlin inside him, and he was frightened by the thought of having to grapple with him in solitude. Lissa wasn't as dispensable now as she had seemed earlier. "Don't go," he said. "Please."

"I'll get nothing but trouble here."

"I didn't mean to yell at you. My nerves were raw, is all. You can understand that. I didn't intend to accuse you of anything, Lissa."

"Even so. You got me all stirred up. And then *him*, jumping into my head. The sounds I was making. I never did that before. Like I was some kind of ventriloquist's dummy, and I could feel Nat trying to move my lips, trying to push my vocal cords, trying to get his words out through me—" She seemed to gag on something. "It was coming out of you, Paul. I thought my head would blow. I don't want to go through that again."

"I beat him back," Macy said. "I shut him off."

"And if he gets out again? Or if you start suspecting me again? Asking me if I'm really on his side? Maybe next time you'll bang me around, some. You could break my arms. You could knock all my teeth out. And then you'd apologize later."

"There's no possibility of that."

"But you've got reason to be hostile. I'm responsible for waking him up inside you, right? Even if I wanted to stay here, you know, it wouldn't be smart for you if I did. Maybe he'll use me now to finish the takeover of your body. Play his mental energy through my ESP output, or something. He almost did that just now, didn't he? Do you want to chance it?"

"Who knows?" Macy said. He caught

her by the arm as she moved slowly toward the door. "Do I have to beg you, Lissa? Don't leave me now."

"First you didn't want anything to do with me. Then you screamed at me that you didn't trust me. Now you don't want me to go. I can't figure you, Paul. When somebody comes out of a Rehab Center, he's supposed to be sane, isn't he? You scare me too much. I want to get out of here."

"Please. Stay."

"What for?"

"To help me fight against him. I need you. And you need me. We can support each other. Separately we're both going to go under. Together—"

"Together we'll both go under too," she said. Moving no closer to the door, though. "Look, I thought you could help me, Paul, that's why I wrote you at the network, that's why I begged you to see me. But now I realize that your troubles are as bad as mine. Worse, maybe. I just hear voices from outside. You've got somebody else in your head. On account of me. We can only harm each other."

"No."

"You ought to believe it. Look what I've already done to you, bringing *him* back. And then you, houncing him into my head for a couple of minutes. And on and on and on like that, things getting worse and worse and worse for both of us."

He shook his head. "I'm going to fight. I've beaten him twice in two days. Next time I'll finish him altogether. But I don't want to be alone while I'm doing it."

Shrugging, she said, "Don't blame me if—"

"I won't." He looked at the time. A sudden bold idea hooking him. By their

works ye shall know them. Yes. Go to the museum, see his version of Lissa. Look at her through his eyes. An unexpectedly powerful hunger rose in him to know the real past, to find out what manner of man he had been, what he had been capable of creating. In a sense what *I* was capable of, in my other self. And the sculpture of Lissa a bridge to that hidden past. Leading him out of this shadowy unlife into the realm of authentic experience. *He* did this, *he* made it, *his* unique and irreplaceable vision was at work. And I must understand him in order to defeat him. Macy said, "Listen, there's no sense in my going to the office this late in the day. But we've still got the whole afternoon. You know where I want to go? The Metropolitan Museum. To see the sculpture he did of you, the *Antigone 21*."

"Why?"

"Old maxim: Know your enemy. I want to see his interpretation of you. Find out what his mind is like. Size him up, look for the places where I can attack."

"I don't think we should go. It could trigger anything, Paul. You said yourself, how at your office you saw one of his pieces and it almost knocked you out. Suppose at the museum—"

"I was caught by surprise that first time. This is different. I've got to take the offensive, Lissa. Carry the battle to him, do you see? And the museum's as good a place to start as any. Showing him that I can hold my own under any conditions. All right? Let's go, shall we? The museum."

"All right," she said distantly. "The museum."

SEVEN

ENTERING the huge building, he felt apprehensive and ill at ease. An overwhelming sense of not belonging in this vast and labyrinthine palace of culture oppressed him. Searching his stock of synthetic memories, he couldn't find any recollection of having been here before. Or any other art museum. The Rehab people hadn't built a strong interest in the visual arts into him, it seemed. Music, yes. The theater. Even ballet. But not sculpture, not painting, not anything that was likely to impinge on the world Nat Hamlin had inhabited. A deliberate divergence from the abolished past. Still, why was he so edgy about going in? Afraid of being recognized, maybe? People turning, whispering, pointing? Look, that's Nathaniel Hamlin, the famous psychosculptor. He did that naked woman we saw before. Hamlin. Hamlin. That man looks just like Hamlin. Requiring you to say something by way of correction. Pardon me, ma'am, you are in error. My name is Paul Macy. Never done a sculpture in my life. Ostentatiously rubbing your Rehab badge. Thrusting it in her eyes. I must tell you, ma'am, that Nathaniel Hamlin has become an unperson. And the woman fading away in embarrassment, heels clicking on the stone floor, looking back at him over her shoulder, sniffing a little in disdain. Maybe even reporting him to a guard for molesting her. Macy smiled sourly and swept the whole scenario away. Not much chance of any of that happening. Rembrandt could walk through this place and nobody'd recognize him. Michelangelo. Picasso. Mommy, who's that funny little baldheaded man? Shh, dear, I

think that's some senator. Yes. Macy shook off his apprehensions. They went inside.

Just within the main entrance they were held for a moment in a cone of tingling blue light, some kind of scanning device ascertaining that they carried no explosives, knives, cans of paint, or other instruments of vandalism. Evidently there was a lot of free-floating masterpiece-directed hostility in this city. They passed the test and advanced into the colossal central hall. Pink granite pharaohs to the left; bleached marble Apollos to the right. Straight ahead, an immense dizzying vista of receding hallway. The dry smell of the past in here: the nineteenth century, the fourteenth, the third. "Where is it?" he asked, "Your statue."

"Second floor, all the way in the back, the modern art wing," Lissa said. Once again she seemed remote and abstracted. She slipped easily into that kind of withdrawal, that closed-and-sealed surliness. "You go, Paul. I'll wait here and do the Egyptian stuff, or something. I don't want to see it."

"I'd like you to come with me."

"No."

"Jesus, why not?"

"Because it shows how beautiful I was. I don't want to be in the room with you when you see it. And when you turn and look at me afterward and see what I've become. Go on, Paul. You won't have any trouble finding it."

He was stubborn. Refusing to leave her. Unwilling to face the Hamlin piece without her. Suppose the sight of it struck him down again; who would help him up? But she was equally firm. Not going with him, simply not going. The museum expedition was his crazy idea, not hers. She couldn't bear to see

that piece. Won't you? I won't. I won't. A tense little scene in the grand hallway. Their harsh whispers echoing from alabaster arcades. People staring at them as they bickered. He half expected someone to say, any minute, Say, isn't that the sculptor Nathaniel Hamlin? Over there, the big one arguing with the redhead. Terrified by that irrational prospect. His discomfort grew so strong that he was on the verge of letting her have her way when suddenly she nipped her upper lip with her lower teeth, pressed her knuckles to her jawbone, hunched her shoulders as if trying to touch her earlobes with them, sucked in her cheeks. Began quirking her mouth from side to side. Possibly she was being skewered by invisible darts. Eyes wild. Glossy with panic. Saying to him, after some moments, in a veiled, barely audible voice: "Okay, come on, then. I'll go with you. But hurry!"

"What's happening to you, Lissa?"

"I'm picking up voices again." A fusillade of twitches distorting her face. "They're bouncing off the walls, a dozen different strands of thought. Getting louder and louder. All garbled up. Christ, get me out of this room. *Get me out of this room.*"

Everybody in the museum must have heard that. She seemed about to come apart.

He took her elbow and steered her hastily into the long hallway facing them. Hardly anyone here. Without any real idea of where he was going, he hustled her along, infected by the urgency of her distress; she slipped and slid on the smooth polished floor, but he kept her upright. Mounted figures in chain mail streaming toward them and vanishing to the rear. Shimmering

tapestries looming in the dusk. Swords. Lances. Engraved silver bowls. All the loot of the past, and no one around, just a couple of blank-faced robot guards. When they had gone about a hundred yards he halted, aware that Lissa had grown more calm, and they stood for a moment in front of a case of small iridescent Roman glass flasks and vases with elaborate spiral handles. She turned to him, haggard, sweat-streaked, and clung to him, cheek to his chest. Her anxiety definitely subsiding, but she was still upset. Finally she said, "How awful that was. One of the worst ones yet. A dozen of them all talking at once, each one with a pipeline right into my skull. A torrent of nonsense. Swelling and swelling and swelling my head till it wants to explode."

"Is it better now?"

"I don't hear them, anyway. But the echoes inside . . . the noise bouncing around upstairs . . . You know, I wish I could go far away from the whole human race. To some icy planet. To one of the moons of Jupiter. And just live there in a plastic dome, all by myself. Although even there I'd probably pick up the static. Minds radiating at me right across space. Can you imagine what it's like, Paul, never to have real privacy? Never to know when your head is going to turn into a god-damned two-way radio?" Then a chilly laugh from her. "Hey, that's funny. Me asking you about privacy. And you with your own ghost sitting in your head. Worse off than I am. Paul and Lissa, Lissa and Paul. What a pair of fucking cripples we are, you and me!"

"Somehow we'll manage."

"I bet."

"We can get help, Lissa."

"Sure we can. He'll kill you as soon as you go within a mile of your doctors. And nobody can fix me without chopping my brain into hamburger. But we can get help, yeah. I like your optimism, kid." She pointed. "We can take that staircase. Nightmare Number Sixteen is waiting for us."

Up the stairs, through another hall full of Chinese porcelains and Assyrian palace reliefs, past a room of Persian miniatures, one of Iranian pottery, gallery after gallery of archaic treasures, and emerging ultimately in an opulent cube of clear plastic cantilevered out of the rear of the building to overhang the wilted greenery of Central Park. The modern art wing. Crowded, too; Macy looked nervously at Lissa, fearing she would tumble into another telepathic abyss, but she appeared to be in control of herself. Guiding him coolly down yards of gaudy paintings and sculpture and tick-tock artifacts and dancing rasters and metabolic mirrors and liquespheres and all the rest. Left turn. Deep breath. A small room, no door, just a circular entrance. Over the entrance, in raised gilded letters: ANTIGONE 21 BY NATHANIEL HAMLIN. Jesus. A private exhibition hall for it. What he had taken to be the absence of a door was in fact the presence of an invisible air-seal, providing secret shelter for the masterwork within, insuring it its own environment and psychological habitat. They stepped through. No sensation while breaching the seal; cooler on the other side, the air tingling, full of wandering ions. A faint chemical odor. A low hum.

"That's it," Lissa said.

Ten, twelve people clustered in front of it; he couldn't see. She hung tensely

against him, arm jammed through his, ribs raking his side. Her tautness leaked through to him, a mental emanation of something just short of fear. He felt the same way. The knot of onlookers parted and as though through a rift in the clouds he beheld Nathaniel Hamlin's *Antigone 21*.

Nude female figure, larger than life. Unmistakably Lissa, yet no danger that anyone in the room would turn from that radiant statue to the drab drained girl and connect the two of them. Firm, full body. The breasts higher and heavier: had the sculptor idealized them or had Lissa lost weight there too? The pose an aggressive, dynamic one, head flung back, one arm outstretched, legs apart. O Pioneers, that sort of thing. Emphasizing the strength of the woman, the resilience of her. Eyes bright and fierce. Mouth not quite smiling but almost. The entire solid figure crying out, I can take it, I can handle anything, stress and turmoil and flood and famine and revolution and assassination. I have endured, I will endure, I am the essence of endurance. The eternal feminine. And so forth. But of course the sculpture was not merely just a sexy academic nude in a high-powered nineteenth-century mode, nor was it only a sentimentally-conceived monument to stereotyped concepts of womanhood. It was those things, yes, but it was also a psychosculpture, meaning that it approached the condition of being alive, it was a whole cosmos in itself. It did tricks. The room was rigged to heighten the effects. Imperceptible changes of lighting. That odd humming sound, coming from a battery of hidden sonic generators, controlled the mood through its pattern of modulations, hitting the onlookers

at some subterranean level of their psyches. The degree of ionization in the room was constantly changing, too. And the statue itself. Going through a cycle of transformations. Look, the nipples are erect now, the breasts are heaving (but are they, or does it just seem that they move?), the eyes are those of a woman in heat. What has become of the defiant, all-enduring woman of three minutes ago? And yet she changes again. Her juices going sour, her nipples softening; a woman thwarted, a woman denied. How bitter that fractional smile! She holds grudges. In the darkness of the night she would gladly castrate the unsuspecting male. But the strength of hatred ebbs from her. She is afraid; she knows that there are questions for which she has no answers; she feels the phantoms of the night fluttering against the windows, wings beating harder and harder. Terror closes its hand on her. She is alone, naked and vulnerable, not half so strong as she would have the world believe. If they came to attack her now—but what comes is dawn. A brightening. Finding her place in the universe under a friendly sky. She seems taller. Older, though no less beautiful; voluptuous, though cooler than before; in command of herself, beyond doubt. Venus ascendant. A totally different self each few minutes. What machinery is at work beneath that figure's supple skin? How is this cycle of transformations propelled? Watching it, the constantly shifting play of emotions and impressions, the subtle mutations of posture and attitude, Macy feels awed and overpowered but also vaguely cheated. He had not known what to expect of the art of his former self, other than

that it would be dramatic and impressive. But is this really art, this clever robot? Will all this mechanical trickery be able to stand alongside the true artistic achievements of the ages? He is no critic, in truth he knows nothing at all, yet the intense realism of the sculpture that is its outstanding characteristic makes it seem esthetically primitive to him, a toy, a stunt, a triumph of craft, not art. But even so. But even so. Impossible not to respond to the power of the thing. How thoroughly Lissa has been captured in those gears and cogs; not his Lissa, not the broken dazed girl he knows, but Nat Hamlin's glorious Lissa, whose caved-in shell has fallen to Hamlin's successor. What Hamlin has created here may be simple-minded next to Leonardo and Cellini and Henry Moore, but behind the superficial superficiality may lie a carefully masked profundity, Macy suspects. He could stand here studying the figure for hours. Days. As others seem to be doing. Those students muttering notes into hand-recorders, and that one, holographing the work from every conceivable angle—they are trapped by it too, plainly. A masterpiece. Undoubtedly a masterpiece. With an effort he turned away from it, feeling an almost audible snap as the sightlines of his contact with the sculpture broke, and glanced at Lissa. She was drawn back, hunched against the wall, lips parted, eyes fixed and glassy, caught by the mesmerism of her overpowering simulacrum up there. A gasp froze on her face. What currents of identity, he wondered, were flowing from her to the sculpture, from the sculpture to her? What draining of self was going on, and what recharging? What must

it be like to behold yourself made into such a work of art?

And where was Hamlin? Why wasn't he jumping and cavorting in pride before his wondrous achievement, as he had that first day in Harold Griswold's office? Hamlin was quiescent. Not absent, though. Macy became gradually aware of him glowing far below the surface, embedded deep in his brain. A thorn in his paw. A pebble in his hoof. Macy hadn't expected Hamlin to remain bolted inside his dungeon for long. Nor did he. Rising slowly now, bubbling toward the top. Evoked into consciousness by the *Antigone* 21. That's all right, Macy thought. Let him come up. I can handle him. Bracing himself, battenning down, Macy waited for his other self to finish drifting toward the surface. Not hostile, this time. Not even aggressive. A prevailing air of calmness about him. No resentment apparent over his defeat in their last battle. Perhaps a strategy of deception, though. Get me off guard, then make another quick leap for the speech centers. I'm ready, whatever he tries. But when Hamlin opened their inner conversation, his tone was easy, civil:

—What do you think of it?

Impressive. I didn't know you had it in you.

—Why? Do I seem second-rate to you, Macy?

The only aspect of you that I know is the violence, the criminality. It turns me off. I don't associate great art with that kind of personality.

—What a load of bourgeois crap that is, friend.

Is it?

—Item one, a man can be a thief, a killer, a babybuggerer, anything, and still be a great artist. The quality of

his morals has nothing to do with the quality of his perceptions, hip? You'd be surprised how much of the stuff in this museum was produced by absolute bastards. Item two, I happened to have been a pretty fair artist fifteen years before I became what they call an enemy of society. This piece you see here was entirely finished before I had my breakdown. Item three, since you never knew me, you don't have any goddamn right to judge what kind of person I was.

I concede item two and maybe item one. But why should I yield on number three? I know you plenty well, Hamlin. You've knocked me down, you've played games with my heart, you've attempted to seize sections of my brain, you've threatened outright to kill me. Should I love you for that? This is the first time since you surfaced that you've seemed even halfway civilized. You come on like a thug; do you blame me for being surprised you could produce a sculpture like this?

—You really think I'm a villain?

You're a convicted criminal.

—Forget that shit. I mean my relationship to you. You think I'm acting out of evil impulses.

What else can I think?

—But I'm not, Macy. I don't dislike you, I don't want to harm you, I have no negative feelings toward you at all. It just happens that you're in the way of a man who's fighting for his life.

Meaning you.

—Exactly. I want to be myself again. I don't want to stay submerged inside you.

The court decreed—

—Fuck the court. The whole Rehab system is hysterical nonsense. Why wipe me out? Why not rehabilitate me

in the real sense of the word? I wasn't hopelessly insane, Macy. Shit, yes, I did a lot of awful things, I admit that freely, I was off my head. But in the year 2007 they could have some better way of coping with insanity than the death sentence.

But—

—Let me finish. It *was* a death sentence, wasn't it? To rip me out of my own body and throw me away, and pour someone else into my head? What happened to my whole accumulation of experiences? What happened to my skills and talents? What happened to me, damn it, what happened to *me*? Killed. Killed. Nothing but a zombie body left. It's only by the merest fluke that I'm still here, even in this condition, hanging on inside you. What kind of humanitarianism is that? What are they saving, when they keep the body and throw away the soul?

I didn't make the laws.

—Agreed, Macy. But you're no fool. You can see how flagrantly unjust Rehab is. They want to separate me from society because I'm dangerous, okay, I agree, I agree, put me away, try to fix me, drain all the poison out of me. Right. But instead this. The super resources of modern science are employed to murder a great but somewhat deranged sculptor and invent a dumb holovision commentator to replace him.

Thank you.

—What else can I say? Look up there, at my *Antigone*. Could you do that? Could anybody else do that? I did it. My unique gift to mankind. And fifty others almost as good. I'm not bragging, Macy, I'm being as objective as hell. I was somebody valuable, I had a special gift. I had intensity, I had

humanity. Maybe my gift drove me crazy after a while, but at least I had something to offer. And you? What are you? *Who* are you? You're nothing. You have no depth. You have no texture. You have no past. You have no reality. I've been sitting here inside you, taking an inventory. I know what you're made of, Macy, and it's all *ersatz*. You have no purpose in existing. You can't do anything that a robot couldn't do better. A holovision commentator? They can program a machine with pear-shaped tones, father, and it'll broadcast you off the map.

I admit all this, Macy replied. He stood stiffly, pretending to study the sculpture. He wondered how much time had elapsed during his colloquy with Hamlin. Five seconds? Five minutes? He had lost track of external things. *Granted that you were a genius and I'm a nobody, what am I supposed to do about it?*

—Vacate the premises.

Just like that.

—Yes. It wouldn't be hard. I could show you how. You relax, you lower your defenses, you let me administer the *coup de grace*. Then you disappear back into the limbo they whistled you out of, and I can function as Nat Hamlin wearing the mask of Paul Macy. I can begin to sculpt again. Quietly. As long as I don't harm anybody, I'd get away with it.

You'd harm me.

—But you have no right to exist! You're fiction, Macy. You're not real.

I exist now. I'm here. I have feelings and ambitions and fears. When I eat a steak I taste it. When I fuck a girl I enjoy it. You know how it goes. Cut me and I bleed. I'm real, as real as anybody who ever lived.

—How can I persuade you that you aren't?

You can't. I'm as real to me as anybody else is to himself. Look, Hamlin, look, this isn't a thing for logic. I can't just say to you, Okay, you're a genius, I bow to the demands of culture, lop off my head and take my place. A far, far better thing, et cetera, et cetera. No. I'm here. I want to go on being here.

—Where does that leave me?

Up shit creek, I guess. Right now you're the one who's unreal, you know that? Officially you're dead. You're just a spook wandering around my skull. Why don't you do the noble thing? Stop fucking up a decent and inoffensive human being's life, and clear out. Vacate the premises, as you say. Lower the defenses and let me clobber you.

—Some chance.

You've given the world enough masterpieces.

—I'm still young. I'm better than you. I deserve to live.

The court said otherwise. The court sent you out of the world for God knows what kind of crimes, and—

—for rape. That's all it was, rape.

I don't care if it was for reusing old postage stamps. A verdict's a verdict. I'm not giving up my life to remedy what you consider to have been a miscarriage of justice.

—You don't have a life, Macy!

Sorry. I do.

A long silence. Macy peered at the sculpture, at the onlookers, at the walls. His head was spinning. Hamlin's presence remained manifest within him as a steady pressure, wordless, heavy. And then, finally:

—All right. We're getting nowhere like this. Go stroll around the museum. We'll continue the discussion some

other time.

Sensation of Hamlin letting go. Dropping once more into the depths. Plop. Splash. The illusion of solitude. Solemn trombone music marking the alter ego's exit. Macy was drenched in sweat. Unsteady on his feet.

Lissa: "Have you seen enough yet?"

"I think so. We can go. Wait, let me hold your hand."

"Is something wrong, Paul?"

"A little wobbly." He wasn't able to look at her. Clutching her cool fingers between his. Step. Step. Through the invisible door. In the gallery outside he found a bench and sank down on it. Lissa fluttering over him, bewildered. He said, "While I was looking at it, I had a sort of conversation with Hamlin. Very quietly. He was almost charming."

"What was he telling you?"

"A lot of insidious bullshit. He invited me to get out of our body so he could have it. On the grounds that he's a great artist and deserves to live more than I do."

"That's just the sort of thing he'd say!"

"It's just the sort of thing he did say. I told him no, and he went back to his cave. And now I realize I must have put more energy into that chat than I thought."

"Sit. Rest."

"I'm going to." ~

"How about the *Antigone*?" she asked.

"Incredible. Demolishing. I almost feel a kind of second-hand paternal pride in it. I mean, these hands here made it. This brain conceived it. Even if I wasn't there at the time. And—"

"No," Lissa said. "These hands made it, yes, but not this brain." She tapped

his skull lightly, affectionately, with three fingertips. "A brain's just a globe of gray cheese. Brains don't conceive sculptures. *Minds* do. And this wasn't the mind that conceived the *Antigone*."

"I realize that," he told her stiffly. Somehow her quibbling upset him. A show of loyalty for Hamlin, perhaps. Arousing jealousy in him. Hard to accept the truth that she had been there while that piece was being fashioned, the days before Paul Macy was born. To think about that made him feel like an intruder in his own body. What ecstasies had Lissa and Hamlin shared, what joys and griefs, what moments of exaltation? He was shut out of all those events. Cut off by the impenetrable wall of the past. Other times, another self. But *she* could remember. Scowling, he watched the museumgoers filing by threes and fours into the Hamlin room. Hamlin is right, he thought gloomily. I'm nothing. I have no texture. I have no past. I have no reality. Abruptly standing, he said, "Is there anything else you'd like to see, as long as we're in the museum?"

"This trip was your idea."

"As long as we're here."

"No, nothing," she said. "Not really."

"Let's go, then."

"Did you learn whatever you wanted to learn from the *Antigone*?" she asked.

"Yes," he said. "All that I wanted to learn. And more. Maybe too much more." They hurried from the building by a side door in the Egyptian wing.

EIGHT

EMERGING into the sunlight revived his vigor a bit. It was still only about

four in the afternoon. At Lissa's suggestion they went uptown, to her place; there were some things she needed to get, she said. Unspoken in that was the assumption that she would be moving in with him. He didn't object. He couldn't say that he loved her, as Hamlin evidently had, or that he was even on the verge of falling in love with her; but their individually precarious circumstances demanded a mutual defense treaty, and living together was the obvious logistical arrangement. For the time being, at least. In the tube heading north she was cheerful, even a little manic: definitely up, despite the throngs of fellow travelers pressing close. Her ESP didn't seem to operate all the time. It was something like Hamlin was for him, he imagined: coming and going, ebbing and flowing, now virtually in full possession, now weak and undetectable. When the demon was on her, she came close to disruption and collapse. At other times, such as now, she was lively, alert, buoyant. Yet there was a hard fretful edge to her gaiety. As if she were contemplating at all times the possibility that her telepathic sensitivity would switch itself on, here in the tube, and plunge her once more into frenzy.

Her apartment was grim: one shabby room in an antique building on a forgotten limb of the city. Something out of Dickens. The lame, the halt, and the blind infesting the place, dirty children everywhere, fat old women, sinister cutthroaty young men, dogs, cats, screams, shrieks, wild laughter from behind concave doors. A prevailing odor of urine and exotic spices. Not just the twentieth century surviving here: more like the nineteenth. The booming of holovision sets in the halls

seemed like a grotesque anachronism. They walked up, five flights. One didn't expect to find liftshafts in this sort of house, but one hoped it dated at least from the era of elevators. Apparently not. Why did she live here? Why not go to one of the people's cooperatives, stark but at least clean, and surely no more costly than this? She preferred this, she told him. He couldn't follow her mumbled explanation, but he thought it had to do with the construction of the walls; was she saying that in an old building like this she wasn't as bothered by her neighbors' telepathic emanations as she would be in a flimsily-built co-op?

Within this dismalness she had carved an equally dismal nest. A squarish high-ceilinged room with clumsy furniture, patched draperies, simple utensils. A tiny stained power-pack to cook on, a coldsink in lieu of real refrigeration. He didn't see toilet facilities. Everything in disarray. No housekeeper, she. The bed unmade, the exposed sheets carrying half a dozen layers of yellowish stains—that bothered him, he could guess at the origin of the stains—and books scattered everywhere. On the windowsill, on the floor, even under the bed. So she was a diligent reader. Interesting. You could judge a person's character by his reading. Macy realized he scarcely knew Lissa at all. What could he say about her? That she seemed fairly bright but had shown no signs so far of having intellectual interests, that she was (so far as he was capable of telling, given the synthetic nature of his available past experience) a passably good lay, that she once had been closely associated with an important contemporary artist. Period. Had she had an education? A career of her

own, goals in life, talents, skills? A model is only a cipher, a shape, a set of curves and planes and textures; Hamlin was too complicated a man to have fallen in love with her purely as model, so there had to be something back of the exterior, she must have had some kind of interior substance, she must have done something in the world other than pose for Nat Hamlin. At least until her increasingly more turbulent inner storms had driven her to take refuge in this squalid place. But he knew nothing. Had she traveled? Did she have a family? Dreams of becoming an artist herself? Perhaps her books might tell him something. Helplessly, he surveyed and inventoried her library while she bustled around collecting her other possessions. Immediately he found himself in difficulties: he was no reader himself, had merely skimmed a few popular novels during his stay in the Rehab Center, and whatever Hamlin had read, if he had read anything at all, was of course gone from Macy's mind. Macy had only the *illusion* of a familiarity with literature. Dr. Brewster, the literary one, had programmed him with hazy plot summaries and dislocated images and even with the physical feel of some books, so that he knew quite clearly that *The Iliad* was a tall orange volume with cream-colored paper and elegant rounded print. But what was it about? A war, long ago. A quarrel over a woman. Proud barbarian chieftains. Who was Homer? Had he lived before Hemingway? Jesus, I'm an illiterate! And so, looking through Lissa's heaps of books, he could draw no certain conclusions, except that she seemed to read (or at least to own) a lot of novels, thick serious-looking ones, and that

perhaps a fifth of the books were works of biography and history, not casual light stuff by any means. So she must be a more complex person than she had revealed herself to him thus far to be. Anybody, no matter how dim, might happen to pick up a book occasionally, but Lissa had surrounded herself with them, which argued for the presence within her of psychic hungers for knowledge. He tried to touch up his image of her, making her less waif-like and dependent, less the hapless, whining victim of circumstances, more of a self-propelled inner-guided individual with purpose and direction and a sphere of interests. Although he still had difficulty seeing her as anything other than part of the furniture in Nat Hamlin's studio, or as a pitiful casualty of modern urban life. She refused to come alive for him as a genuine, fully operative human being. Maybe it's because I don't understand people very well, being so new in the world. Or perhaps one of the doctors built his own archaic attitudes toward women in general into me: does Gomez, say, see them only as extensions and pale reflections of the men they live with? Mere bundles of foggy emotion and woolly response? But they don't just drift from event to event, letting things happen to them. They won't forget to get out of bed if nobody tells them to. Women have minds of their own. I'm sure they do. They must. They must. And interesting minds. Some commitment to something besides survival, meals, fucking, babies. Then why does she seem so hollow to me? I have to try to get to know her better.

She was filling a large battered green suitcase with her things. Clothes,

knickknacks, a dozen books. Something large and flat, maybe a sketchpad. A folder of old letters and papers. She stuffed five more books in at the very last.

A tepid evening, an indifferent night. Dinner at a beanery a few blocks from his place. Afterward, home, a couple of gulps, some desultory chatter, bed. No outbursts of telepathy to plague her. No resurgences of Hamlin to bother him. They were free to pursue one another's innerness without distractions, but somehow it didn't happen; they talked all around their troubles without coming to any of the main issues. He was surprised to learn she was not quite twenty-five years old, four or five years below his guess. Born in Pittsburgh, no less. Father some kind of scientist, mother an expert on population dynamics. Good genes. They sounded like acceptable types. Lissa hadn't seen them in years. Came to New York, age 17, to study art. (Aha!) Thought also of writing novels. (Aha-haha!) Turning point in life the 15th of June, 2004, age 18, meets famed artist Nathaniel Hamlin. Falls wildly in love with him. He doesn't notice her at all, so she thinks (scene is a meet-the-faculty party at the Art Students' League, everybody wildly stoned, Hamlin—guest lecturer, or something, that semester—urbanely putting on all the pretty girls.) But a week later he calls her. Drinks? Stroll in Central Park? Of course. She is terrified. Hopes he'll accept her as a private student. Wants to bring him to her apartment (not this present uptown hovel) and show him her sketches. Doesn't dare. A nice chaste summertime stroll. Afterwards she is sure he found her too

trivial, too adolescent, but no, he calls again, exactly seven days later. What a sweet time that was. Care to see my studio? Out in Darien, Connecticut. She has no idea where is Darien. He'll pick her up, never fear. Long sleek car. Driving it himself. She has brought her portfolio, just in case. He takes her to flamboyant country estate, unbelievable place: swimming pool, creek, pond full of mutated goldfish in improbable colors, big stone house, medium-big studio annex. Turns out he isn't interested in her as an artist at all, wants her as model: has some ambitious project in mind for which she would be perfect. She is awed. Her portfolio lying neglected in the car. I need to see the body, he says. Of course. Of course. Strips: blouse, slacks. Thoughtfully omitted to don underwear that day. He studies her carefully. Oh, God, my backside's too flat, my boobs are too big, or maybe not big enough! But no, he compliments her, good tight fanny, cute shape, will do, will do. And suddenly his pants are open in front. (Oh, you've seen it, Macy, you know it like your own!) She is thrown into panic. She's been laid before, yes, eight, ten fellows, not coming on as timid innocent at all, but yet this is the authentic erection of *Nathaniel Hamlin* that now approaches her, which is something very special. Admired his work all her life, never dreamed that one day he'd be presenting his mast to her. Can't take her eyes off it until it disappears into her. In and out. In and out. *Nathaniel Hamlin's* authentic thing knows its business. Such terrific intensity boiling within him, and he expresses it with his pecker. She comes a thousand times. Afterward they both run naked around

the estate, swim, laugh, get stoned. He grabs a camera and holographs her for an hour. You and me, he says, we're going to make a masterpiece the world won't ever forget. Then they dress, he drives her to a restaurant near the Sound, such glamor that it dizzies her, and finally, late at night, deposits her, an exhausted astounded adolescent heap of much-fucked flesh, at her apartment. An unforgettable experience. Then she doesn't hear from him for three months. Despair. At last an apologetic postcard from Morocco. Another, a month and a half later, from Baghdad. At Christmastime a card with Japanese stamps on it. Then, January '05, a phonecall. Back in town at last. See you at nine tonight, break all other engagements. And from then on she is more or less his full-time mistress, living at Darien much of the time, naturally dropping out of art school, drifting away from old friends who now seem naive and immature to her. New friends, exciting ones. Even becoming friendly with Hamlin's wife. (A peculiar marital relation there, Macy concluded.) Early in '06, after nearly a year of planning, he gets down to serious work on the *Antigone 21*. Months of toil for him and for her; he is a demon when he works. Twelve, fifteen, eighteen hours a day. Finally almost finished. Almost finished with her, too. He has been talking of marrying her since the summer of '05, but their relationship grows increasingly tense. Physical violence: he slaps her, kicks her a couple of times, balls her once by main force when she doesn't want it, ultimately knocks her down the stairs and breaks her pelvis. Hospital. During which time he succumbs completely to the disintegration of

personality that has, unknown to her, been going on in him for most of the year, and commits Dreadful Deeds upon the persons of a variety of women. He is arrested and tried; she sees him no more until that eerie day in May of 2011 when she crashed into Paul Macy on the streets of Manhattan North.

And your telepathy problem, Macy wants to ask? When did that start? When did it become severe? But obviously she doesn't want to talk about that. She will speak to him tonight only of old business, her romance with the defunct great artist. And now she has talked herself out. Silence. Lights out. Two red roaches in the darkness. Pungent smoke rising ceilingward. This would be the sort of moment, Macy thought, when Hamlin would appear. To append footnotes to Lissa's story. But Hamlin, missing his cue, did not appear. It began to occur to Macy that each of his encounters with Hamlin might drain the other's strength as much as it did his, possibly more; between colloquies, Hamlin had to lie doggo, recharging. Maybe not so, but a cheering possibility. Tire him out, wear him down, eventually eject him. An endurance contest.

Macy turned dutifully to Lissa, not particularly in need of her but feeling that they ought to commemorate her moving-in with some kind of celebration of passion; his hand slipped over one of her breasts, but she responded not at all, merely lying there in a passive stony haze, and an uncheering possibility struck him: when she makes love with me, is she really only trying to recapture those moments of fire with *him*? I am Nat Hamlin's well-endowed body minus Nat Hamlin's trouble-

somely violent nature; is that not all she seeks from me? The thought that he might be, for her, nothing but a dead man's reanimated penis did not amuse him. Of course she said she enjoyed him for his own sake, but of what did his own sake consist? Having loved a genius, could she love a non-entity equally well? Or at all? A young, impressionable art student would of course be drawn automatically to a magnet such as Nat Hamlin, but Paul Macy should have no pull. Who am I, what am I, wherein lies my texture, my density? I am nothing. I am unreal. Hamlin's shadowy successor. His relict. Macy attempted to check this cascade of negativisms, telling himself that Hamlin was undoubtedly causing it by releasing a river of poisons from his subcranial den. But he could not coax himself just now to a higher self-esteem. Entering her, he pushed the piston mechanically back and forth for three or four minutes, feeling wholly detached from her except at the point of entry, and, since she gave no hint of being with him in any way, he let himself go off and sank into the usual bothered sleep, infested by incubi and revenants.

Many sympathetic glances at the network office the next day. Everybody tiptoeing around him, speaking in soft tones, grinning a lot, sidestepping every situation of potential stress or conflict. Obviously all of them afraid he might flip at the first jarring stimulus. It was a regression to the way they had treated him weeks ago, when he had first come here, when they thought a Rehab needed to be handled as carefully as a barrel of eggs. He wondered why. Was it because he had called in sick yester-

day, and now they assumed he had been suffering from some special affliction of Rehabs, some slippage of the identity, that required extra-cautious handling? Their excessive kindness, implying as it did that he was more vulnerable than they, irritated him. After two and a half hours of it he cornered Loftus, Stilton Fredericks' executive assistant, and asked her about it.

He said, "I want you to know that what kept me home yesterday was simply an upset stomach. A case of the runs and a lot of puking, okay?"

She looked at him blankly. "I don't remember asking."

"I know you didn't ask. But everybody else around this place seems to think I had some sort of nervous breakdown. At least, that's how they've been treating me today. So fucking kind it's killing me. So I thought I'd let you spread the word that I'm all right. A mere internal indisposition."

"You don't like people to be nice to you, Macy?"

"I didn't say that. I just don't want my fellow workers making inaccurate assumptions about the state of my head."

"Okay, so you didn't have a nervous breakdown. So why do you look so strange?"

"Strange?"

"Strange," Loftus said.

"What way?"

"Look in the mirror." Then, a moment of tenderness breaking through the steel: "If anything's the matter that any of us could fix—"

"No. No. Honestly, it was only an upset stomach."

"Uh-huh. Okay, if anybody asks, I'll tell them. Nobody's going to whisper

behind your back."

He thanked her and made a quick escape. Executive washroom: amid all the electronic gimmickry, the sonic shavers and the klein-bottle urinals, he found a mirror, standard variety, silver-backed glass as in days of yore. A fierce, bloodshot face looking back at him. Furrowed forehead. Nostrils flaring. Lips compressed, mouth drawn off to one side. Jesus, no wonder! He was Mr. Hyde and Dr. Jekyll both at the same time, his features all snarled up, reflecting the most intense kind of interior agonies. And this without a buzz from Hamlin for the past eighteen hours. This double existence, this squatter occupation of the lower reaches of his mind, was corroding his face, turning him into an ambulatory flag of distress. Of course they were all being sweet to him today; they could see the signals of imminent collapse inscribed on his brow. Yet he felt relatively relaxed today. What must he look like when Hamlin was near the surface and prodding him? Macy ventured an exploratory sweep. Hamlin? Hamlin, you there? My private permanent bad dream. Come up where I can see you. Let's have a chat. But no, all quiet on the cerebral front. Feeling snubbed, Macy set out to repair his face. Stripped to the waist. Sticking his head into the hot-air blower. Loosen the muscles, soften the scowl. A little humidity, maestro. Ah. Ah, how good that is on the tactile net. Thrust noggin now into whirlpool sink. Round and round and round, bubble bubble bubble, hold your breath and let the lovely water work its magic. Ah. Ah. Splendid. Back to the hot air to dry off. Now pop a trunk. Blow a gold. Survey the map. Better, much better. The tension

draining away; a lucky thing, too, they wouldn't have let you step in front of a camera looking all screwed up. Macy was still refurbishing himself, putting his clothes back on, when Fredericks walked into the john. A hearty phony laugh out of him, ho ho ho. "Interrupting you in a moment of relaxation, Paul?"

"No. All done relaxing now. And feeling much better."

"We were all quite concerned when you phoned in yesterday."

"Just a jumpy stomach, was all. Much better now. See?" Flashing his rehabilitated features at Fredericks. "I appreciate the concern, but I'm really pretty tough. Stilton," he added reluctantly. A hell of a name to carry through life. Fredericks addressed himself to the task of unloading his bladder. Macy went out, working hard at looking loose. The effort must have been worthwhile; people stopped pampering him. At half past two he picked up his script for the day, ran through the visuals four or five times, rehearsed the audio. A two-minute squib on the coronation in Ethiopia, surging throngs, lions marching on chains through the streets, a herniated corner of the fifteenth century poking into the twenty-first. Macy wondered how Mr. Bercovici, he who had selected him at the Rehab Center for this job, was making out in Addis Ababa. Was that him at the edge of the crowd, picked up by the trusty hovereye, that plump white face among the hawkfeatured brown ones? Here and gone; probably the South African consul-general, or whoever. Macy carried off his voice-over nobly. *"Amid the pomp and glamor of a medieval empire, the former Prince Takla Haymanot today*

became the Lion of Judah, King of the Kings of Ethiopia, His Excellency the Negus Lebna Dengel II, newest monarch in a line of royalty descended from King Solomon himself. . . ." Beautiful. And then home to Lissa through thin rain.

She was in bed, reading, wearing a tattered green housecoat that looked old enough to be one of the Queen of Sheba's handmedowns, nothing at all underneath it, pinkish-brown nipples peeping through. One quick look and he knew, as if by telepathic transmission, that she had had a bad day. Her face had that sullen, pouty look; her hair was uncombed, a wild auburn tangle; the stale smell of dried sweat was sharp in the air of the bedroom. He felt strangely domesticated. Hubby coming home from hard day at office, slatternly wife about to tell him of the day's petty crises. She tossed aside her book and sat up. "Christ," she said. Her favorite expletive. "An all-day bummer, this was. Rainy weather indoors and out."

He kicked off his shoes. "Bad?"

"The anvil chorus in my head." Shrugging. "Let's not talk about it. I was going to whip up a fancy dinner, but I didn't get up the energy. I could put something together fast."

"We'll go out. Don't bother." He eased out of his overclothes. Fifteen seconds of dead air. Despite her saying she didn't want to talk about today, she seemed obviously waiting for him to start questioning her. Gambit declined. He was tired and fretful himself: Hamlin beginning to clamber toward the surface again, maybe. He looked at her. She at him. The silence continued, dragging on until it had

attained a tangible presence of its own. Then Lissa appeared to tune the tension out; she disconnected something in herself and slumped back against the pillow, sinking into that brooding withdrawal that she affected about half the time. Macy got himself a beer. When he returned to the bedroom she was still eighteen thousand light-years away. A curious notion came to him: that unless he made contact with her in some fashion this very minute, she would be wholly lost to him. Her closedness annoyed him, but he hid his pique and, going to her, pulled back the coverlet to caress the outside of her bare thigh. A friendly gesture, loving, almost. She didn't seem to notice. He touched his cold beer to her skin. A hiss. "Hey!"

"Just wanted to find out if you were still here," he said.

"Very funny."

"What's the matter, Lissa?" The question out of him at last.

"Nothing. Everything. This shitty rain. The air in here. I don't know." Momentary wildness in her eyes. "I've been picking up noise all day in my head. You and Hamlin, Hamlin and you. Like a kind of radioactive trace in the air. I shouldn't have moved in here."

"Surely you can't pick up telepathic impulses from someone who isn't even in the room!"

"No? How do you know? Do you know anything at all about it? Maybe your ESP waves soak into the paint, into the woodwork. And radiate back at me all day. Don't try to tell me what I've been feeling. The two of you, banging at me off the walls, blam blam blam, hour after hour." These sharp sentences were delivered in an inap-

propriately flat, absent tone. At the end of which she disconnected again.

"Lissa?"

Silence.

"Lissa?"

"What?"

"Remember, you came looking for me, I told you it wasn't good for us to be together. And you said we needed each other, right? So don't take it out on me if it doesn't work well."

"I'm sorry." A ten-year-old's insincere apology.

More silence.

He tried to make allowances for her mood. Cooped up all day. Raining. Hostile ions in the air. Her period coming on, maybe. A woman's entitled to be bitchy sometimes. Still, he didn't need to take it. If there was too much telepathic noise here, she could go back to the pigsty.

"I heard that," she said.

"Oh, Jesus."

"My period isn't due for a week. And if you want me to go to the pigsty, say it out loud and I'll pack right now."

"Do you read my mind all the time?"

"Not like that, no. What I get, it's a general hazy fuzz that I can identify as your signal, and a different fuzz that's *his*, but not usually any sharp words. Except that time it was perfectly clear. Am I really being bitchy?"

"You aren't being much fun," he said.

"I'm not having much fun, either."

"How about a shower? And then a good dinner." Trying to repair things. "A dress-up dinner, downtown. All right?" Like humoring a cranky child. Did she hear that too? Apparently not. Getting up, shucking her housecoat. Not bothering to hold herself upright;

(Continued on page 122)

THE PEACEFULNESS OF VIVYAN JAMES TIPTREE, JR.

Illustrated by MICHAEL HINGE

James Tiptree's last story in these pages was "I'm Too Big but I Love to Play" (March, 1970), and now, after too long an absence, he returns with a story about the vulnerability of innocence. "I ran into a real-life Vivyan in Yucatan," he says. "I hope this story conveys the sadness, the waste. . ."

THE NEWSMAN had come a long way, studied by small spaceburnt men who wore their lasers against naked callus. And he in turn had stared at his first sealmen, the natives of McCarthy's World. The newsman had been careful not to call it McCarthy's World now, but Sawewe. Sawewe meaning of course *Freedom*.

For another long while all the newsman had seen of Sawewe was the dilapidation of the old Terran Enclave and a perfectly flat view of sea on one side and tropical scrub on the other. The surface of Sawewe was a limestone plain pitted with sinkholes which led—some of them—to the continent-wide cavern system in which the sealmen lived. Worthless, except that those grey-green spikes stretching unharvested to the horizon were silweed. The newsman, whose name was Keller, blew out his lips when he saw it. Back in the Empire a gram bag of silweed was worth his term credits. He knew now why the planet-burners had been held off.

Finally, because Keller was patient

and tough and his credentials were good there came the long trip in the sealed floater, and the blindfold, and the longer hours of stumbling down and down. Sawewe was not trusting toward Terrans. Keller tripped, heard a faint splash echo. Sealmen hooted, a scanner clicked. He trudged on, hoping he would not have to swim.

At last a hard woman's voice said, "Leave him here. You can take that off now."

He blinked into an enormous green dimness, a maze of terraces crumbling into water, low walls, incongruous wires, a plastic console in a carved niche. Folds of rock hung from the sky. This was a very old place.

"He will be here in an hour," said the woman, watching him. "He is on the reef."

Her hair was grey. She wore a wet-suit but no weapons and her nose had been slit and crudely repaired. An Empire prisoner, one of the Terran traitors who had worked for Sawewe.

"Did they tell you about the contamination?"

Keller nodded.

"The Empire had no need to do that. We never had weapons there. . . . If he talks to you will you tell lies like the others?"

"No."

"Maybe."

"Did I lie about Atlixco?"

Her shrug conceded nothing. Keller could see that her face had once been very different.

"That's why he decided to see you."

"I'm very grateful, Mamsen."

"No titles. My name is Kut." She hesitated. "His wife Nantli was my sister."

She went away and Keller settled on a stone bench beside an ancient stalagmite frieze. Through the fins of a fish-god he could see two sealmen wearing headsets. A communications center. The pavement in front of him ended in a natural pool which shimmered away into gloom, lit here and there by yellow light-shafts from the stone sky. Water chuckled, a generator keened.

Suddenly Keller was aware that a man was squatting quietly by the poolside, looking at him. Their eyes met and the man smiled. Keller was immediately struck by the peaceful openness of the stranger's face. His smile was framed in a curly black beard. Like a gentle pirate Keller thought, or a minstrel. A very tall man hunkered down like a boy, holding something.

Keller rose and sauntered over. It was a curious shell.

"The carapace has two openings," the man told him gently turning the shell. "The animal inside is bimorphic, sometimes a single organism, sometimes two. The natives call it *Noshingra* the Come-and-go animal." He smiled up at Keller, his eyes very clear and



vulnerable. "What's your name?"

"Keller, Outplanet News. What's yours?"

The man's eyes softened as though Keller had made him a present and he continued to gaze at Keller in a way so receptive and innocent that the newsman, who was very tired, found himself speaking of his journey and his hopes for the coming interview. The tall man listened peacefully, touching the shell with his hands as if it were a talisman that could protect them both from war and power and pain.

Presently the woman Kut came back with a mug of maté and the man unfolded himself and drifted quietly away.

"Biologist?" Keller asked. "I didn't catch his name."

The woman's face went bleaker.

"Vivyan."

The newsman's memory hunted, jarred.

"*Vivyan?* But—"

She sighed. Then she jerked her head, motioning Keller to follow her. They went along behind a wall which became an open fretwork. Looking through, Keller could see the tall figure ambling toward them across a little bridge, still holding his shell.

"Watch," the woman told him.

THE BOY Vivyan had noticed the brown man first around the ski-fires of the snowy planet Horl. Vivyan noticed him particularly because he did not come to talk as most people did. Better so, Vivyan felt obscurely. He did not even learn the brown man's name then but simply saw him among the flame-lit faces, a stocky grey-brown man textured all over except for two white owl-rings around his eyes which

meant he wore goggles a lot.

Vivyan smiled at him as he did at everyone and when the singing was over he skied out across the moonlight to the ice-forests, pausing often to touch and examine lovingly the life of this mountain world. It was not long before certain snow-creatures trusted him, and the even shyer floating animals who were Horl's birds. The girl who had been with the brown man came to him too. Girls usually did. Vivyan found this delightful but not remarkable. People and animals always came to him and his body knew the friendly and joyful ways to touch each kind.

People, of course, seemed to need also to talk and talk which was a pity because their talk was mostly without meaning. Vivyan himself talked only to his special friend on Horl, the man who knew the names and hidden lives of the snow world and accepted all that Vivyan had observed. Thus should a man live, Vivyan knew, questing and learning and loving. He always remembered everything he encountered; his memory was perfect, like his eyes and ears. Why not? It pained him to see how other humans lived in dimness and distraction and he tried to help.

"See," he said tenderly to the brown man's girl, "Each branchlet has one drop of sap frozen on the tip of the bud. That makes a warming lens. It is called photothermal sap; without it the tree cannot grow."

The brown man's girl looked, but she turned out to be a strange tense girl preoccupied with hurtful things. She became preoccupied also with Vivyan's body and he did all he could for her, very enjoyably. And then when she and some of the others weren't around any

more it was time to move on.

He didn't expect to see the brown man again. But some while later in the cantinas of McCarthy's World he did. McCarthy's World was the best yet—its long bright beaches with hidden marvels of its reefs by day and unending welcome in its nights. He had a special friend here too, a marine zoologist who lived up the coast beyond the Terran Enclave. Vivyan never went into the Enclave. His life was in the combers or drifting through the redolent cantinas, flowing with the music and the good vibrations. Young people from countless Terran worlds came to McCarthy's beaches and many short, excitable spacers on leave from the Terran base and even a few real aliens.

As always, arms and lips opened to him and he smiled patiently at the voices without hearing the words that his memory could not help recording. It was while he was being harangued by one of the spacers that Vivyan saw the white owl-eyes watching from the shadows. It was the brown man. A new girl was with him now.

The spacer pulled at him, obscurely and drunkenly outraged. Something about the natives of McCarthy's World. Vivyan had never seen one. He longed to. His friend had told him they were very shy. And there was something negative connected with them about which he did not inquire. It was tied in some way with a large badness—the lost third planet whose name Vivyan did not know. Once, he knew, all these three worlds, Horl and McCarthy's and the nameless one, had been all together and all friendly until the wrong thing had occurred. Terrans were hurt. A pity. Vivyan did not probe into negative, angry things. He smiled and nodded

gently at the spacer, longing to share with him the reality of sunlight on the reef, quietness in the wind, love. The brown man was as before, remote. Not in need. Vivyan smiled and let arms pull him out to fly firekites on the murmuring beaches.

On another evening they were all linked in a circle singing one of the aliens' songs when the brown man's girl began to sing to him with slow intensity across the shadows. Vivyan saw she was a delicate cool girl like the firelace on the reefs and hoped she would come to him soon. When she sought him out next day he learned that her name was Nantli. To his delight she spoke very little. Her eyes and her red-gold body made him feel enveloped in sun-foam.

"Beautiful Vivyan." Her hands traced him shyly. He smiled his innocent pirate's smile. People always said that, it seemed to be their way of making him feel good. They didn't understand that he always felt good. It was part of his way to be, natural that his long olive body was strong and that his beard curled joyfully. Why did other people mess themselves up so?

"Come to the reefs." It was fine how eagerly she came and let him teach her to quest down among the firelace to the hidden caverns below. McCarthy's fish circled and danced above their nests, rolling horrified eyes, so tame and ludicrous that the humans spluttered and had to surface to laugh. Nantli dived and laughed and dived again until Vivyan became worried and hauled her out on the rocks. And later in the breast of the moonlit dunes it was very good. When she had left him he stretched and set out up the beach to the home of his friend, bearing many things of which he wished to be told

the names.

McCarthy's sun was a ghost flower rising on the misty sea when he walked back. Beautiful how it fitted, Vivyan thought, the total serenity he always felt after his long talk in the lamplit room. When he looked back at the beach ahead there was a grey-brown figure by the line of sea-wrack. Jarring. He could think of nothing to do but walk on forward.

The brown man was turning a sea-feather with his foot. He didn't look up, only said quietly, "Strange pattern. What's it called?"

Reassured Vivyan squatted down to trace the sea-feather's veins. "It's a gorgonia, I think. A colony of animals in a common tissue, a coenchyme. This one came from somewhere else, a spore from the ships maybe."

"Another pattern." The brown man frowned, looking out to sea. "I'm interested in patterns. Like on Horl you were doing birds then, wasn't it? With that xenoecologist wallah around the mountain. And my girl went with you, on Horl. And you checked in with your friendly ecologist and my girl and a couple of our group turned up missing. Somebody came for them. Only it wasn't anybody we know and nobody's heard of them since."

He looked at Vivyan.

"And here you're into marine biology. And there's this marine-life wallah down the line you have long sessions with. And Nantli's got interested in you. A pattern. How does the pattern go, Vivyan? Does Nantli disappear too? I wouldn't like that. Not Nantli."

Vivyan kept turning the sea-feather, waiting for the sea-wind to carry away the harshness in the brown man's voice. After a moment he looked up and

smiled.

"What's your name?"

Their eyes met really close then and something began happening inside Vivyan. The brown man's face was changing too as if they were both under water.

"Vivyan," the brown man said with fearful intensity, "*Vivyan*?"

He pronounced it wrong, like *Fee-fyane*. Their eyes locked together and a hurt started lunging behind Vivyan's eyes.

"Vivyan!" the brown man insisted in a horrible tearing voice. "Oh, no. You—" And then everything was perfectly still until he whispered, "I think . . . I've been looking for you . . . Vivyan."

Vivyan's whole head was jerking, he tore his eyes down from the white-ringed glare. "Who are you?" he stammered. "What's your name?"

The brown man put two hard fingers under Vivyan's jaw and turned his face up.

"Look at me. Think of Zilpan, Vivyan. Tlaara, Tlaara-tzunca . . . Little Vivyan, don't you know my name?"

Vivyan gave a raw cry and lunged up clumsily at this small dangerous man. Then he was running into the sea, hurling himself across the shallows to the green depths where no one could follow. He stroked with all his strength, not looking back until he was in the thunders of the reef.

When the anger and hurtfulness had been cleaned away he made for a coralhead far out where he rested and dived and ate a conch and some sweet wet seahares and drowsed in the foam. He saw many calming things, and when the sun set he went back to shore. It was in his mind that he should go again

to visit his friend, but warm voices called him and he let himself be drawn to where huge arthrostraca were being roasted in seaweed. He had never seen the brown man in this place, and soon he began to smile and eat vastly of the tender shellfish in the silvery silweed smoke.

But there was an undercurrent here too, a strainedness. People were restless, talking quick and low-voiced, looking past each other's shoulders. Something unpleasant building, cramping the air.

Vivyan recalled sadly that he had noticed such feelings before. Certainly he must go soon to visit his friend. He hoped it was not becoming time to move on from this place too. He wolfed the delicious clams, soothing himself with the names of peaceful things, *Tethys, Alcyonaria, Coniatites, Cocco-lobis, Nantli*.

But Nantli was not a sea-creature, she was the brown man's girl, and suddenly she was here in the silsmoke by herself, coming to him smiling and still. All at once he felt better. Maybe the badness had gone now, he thought, stroking her hair. They went out together.

But when they reached their place in the dune he felt the tension under her stillness.

"You wouldn't hurt us, would you Vivyan?" She held his sides, peering at his face. The stress inside her was disgusting to feel. He tried to help her, to let his calm flow into her. Her talking was like claws. Something about his friend. Patiently he recounted to her some of his new knowledge of the reef world.

"But about us," she persisted. "You didn't talk with him about us, about

Cox?"

He stroked her breast, automatically registering the news that the brown man's name was *Cox*. Wrongness. He concentrated on the beautiful flow of his palms on her body. Nantli, Nantli. If only he could ease this frenzy that was eating at her. His body guided him and presently she quieted and let him mold them together, let the life rhythm rise in peace. When it had crested and spent itself he stood up into the moonlight, pointing his beard at the sea.

"No, you go," she smiled. "I'm sleepy."

He touched her gratefully and went down to the silver water. As he dived he heard her call.

Beyond the surf he turned and began to swim along the coast. It was better this way; no one could bother him here as they had on the beach. His friend lived in a small cove, beyond the far point; to swim would only mean a little more time and the tide was running with him toward the setting moon. It drew him strongly, but not more strongly than his desire for the peace that only the long quiet talk would bring.

In the rhythm of his swimming he mused. Always there had been a friend for him, as the brown man—*Cox?*—had said. But that was good, that was necessary. How else could he understand a new place? On Horl there had been his friend on the mountain, and before that in another part of Horl where the mines were he had known a man who told him about the folding of mountains and the alien relics at which so many people came to wonder. That had been interesting but somehow troubled; he had not stayed long. And before that on the stations there had

been the friend who taught him the names of stars and the large ways of suns. And before that, on the ships . . . so many lives to learn, such a universe of marvels to remember. His arms rose and thrust tirelessly, carried on the moon tide. He was just feeling the long swells off the point when the strange heads rose around him.

At first Vivyan thought they were McCarthy's seals, or a kind of dugong. Then a streaming crest came up alongside and he saw moonlight on intelligent eyes and knew at once what they were: The natives of McCarthy's World.

He wasn't in the least frightened, only intensely curious. The moon was so bright he could see wet mottlings on the stranger's pelt, like a seal pup. It touched his arm with webbed fingers, pointing to the reef. They wanted him to go there. But he couldn't, not now. He shook his head regretfully, trying to tell them he would come back when he had talked with his friend.

The sealman pointed again, and the others came closer. Then he saw they had weapons. A kind of spring-load spear. As they closed in Vivyan shot downward with all his power. It would have carried him far from any Terran but the sealmen were easily before him in the glimmering darkness, herding him back.

It was not in his nature to fight. He surfaced and swam with them, debating what to do. Was it possible that it was intended for him to bring this too to his friend? But that did not seem fair, when he was already so burdened. He swam mechanically, watching the strangers' eyes film and clear. They seemed to have transparent inner lids like certain fish which could focus ei-

ther in water or air. Their eyes were huge, too; undoubtedly they were nocturnal.

"N'ko, N'ko!" The leader hooted, the first sound they had made. They were motioning him to dive. He did so and found himself being pulled under the reef. Just as his lungs began to knot he saw, incredibly, a bright light ahead. They burst up into a cavern booming with sea-sound. He gulped air, staring with delight at a lantern on a ledge. All doubts vanished, he was glad he had come.

The webbed ones were scrambling out around him. Bipedes no taller than his waist, with lobed and crested heads. When they tugged his arms he bent and let them blindfold him before they led him into a tunnel. What an adventure to tell his friend!

The tunnel was dripping and musty and the way was hard to his feet. Coral. Presently he had to go under water again, still blindfolded. When they came out the air was dry and warmer and when he stumbled he felt crumbling limestone shelves. His sealmen hooted, were answered. Suddenly he was jostled and turned and they were taking his blindfold off in a crowded place where several passageways met.

Before him stood three much larger sealmen. To Vivyan's intense surprise they were holding weapons of a type which he knew was forbidden. He was just looking at these when the scent of the girl Nantli pulled his head around. How could she be here? He smiled uncertainly and then he saw the white eyes of the man Cox. The adventure was going bad.

"All right." Cox spoke to the sealmen who had brought him and they pulled at Vivyan.

"Strip down."

Wondering, he did so and felt an instrument sliding on the base of his spine.

"See," said Nantli's voice. "A scar, I told you."

The brown man made a grunt like a sob and came and grasped Vivyan by the shoulders.

"Vivyan," he said thickly in the strange way. "Where are you from?"

"Alpha Centauri Four," Vivyan told him, automatically remembering the garden city, his parents. The memory felt queer, thin. He saw the big sealmen gazing expressionlessly, cradling their weapons.

"No, before that." Cox's grasp tightened. "Think, Vivyan. Where were you born?"

Vivyan's head began to hurt unparadoxically. He squinted down through the pain, wondering how he could get away.

"They've done something to him, I told you," Nantli said.

"In god's name, try." Cox shook him. "Your real home! Your home, Vivyan. Remember Zilpan mountain? Remember—remember your black pony? Remember *Tlaara*? Have you forgotten your mother *Tlaara* who sent you to Alpha? Remember how she sent you away when the revolt started, to keep you safe?"

The pain was terrible now. "Alpha Centauri Four," he whimpered.

"Stop, Cox," Nantli cried.

"Not Alpha!" Cox shook him savagely, his white eyes glaring. "Atlixco! Can a prince of Atlixco forget so easily?"

"Please stop it, please." Nantli begged. But Vivyan had realised he must listen very carefully in spite of

the pain. Atlixco was the bad place, the world he didn't think about ordinarily. This was not ordinary. His friend would want him to listen.

"The scar," Cox breathed through his teeth, made a kind of dreadful chuckle. "I have one too. They've tried to make you look like an ordinary Terran. Don't you remember that little deformity you were so proud of, Vivyan? Alpha Centauri! You're twenty generations of inbred Atlixco, Vivyan, born with a curly, hairy, tail. *Remember?*"

Vivyan cringed helplessly under the angry voice. Nantli pushed forward.

"What did they tell you about Atlixco, Vivyan?" she asked gently.

A painful shutter seemed to grate in Vivyan's head.

"Butchers . . . murderers. . . . All dead," he whispered.

Nantli pried at the brown man's hands. "Alpha Centauri, he grew up believing it all. A good Terran upbringing. Let him be, there isn't time."

"All dead?" Cox demanded. "Look at me, Vivyan. *You know me*. Who am I?"

"Cox," Vivyan gasped. "I must tell—"

A hard hand slashed across his face, he went down on one knee.

"Tell!" Cox roared. "You traitorous crotchouse! Little Prince Vivyan, the Empire spy. You're the bloody answer to what happened to us on Horl, aren't you? And if we hadn't caught you tonight—"

A kick sent him sprawling at the sealmen's feet. They hooted and stamped. Everyone was yelling, Nantli screaming, "Cox! It's not his fault, they've messed up his mind, you can see that—" until Cox's bellow cut them

all off. He walked over to Vivyan and took him by the hair, scowling down into his face. It never occurred to Vivyan to use his strength against the terrifying little man.

"I should kill you," Cox said quietly. "Maybe I will. But maybe first we have a use for little Vivyan." He straightened up, releasing Vivyan. "If I can bear the sight. All those years," he said in a harsh hurting voice. "Thank god at least the kid is safe. Terran filth. Take him to Doc."

He went out abruptly with the three big sealmen.

The pain in Vivyan's head quieted then. He followed Nantli through green flaking tunnels to a large dim place where seal people were lying everywhere, on ledges and piles of seaweed. Vivyan saw a small face bubbling at him over its mother's side. He smiled eagerly and then he noticed that there was something wrong with it. All of them.

"Their skins," he said. An old Terran stood up.

"Hull-scrapers from the Enclave," the man said. "Poisons 'em."

"This is Vivyan, Doc," said Nantli. "He doesn't know who he is or anything."

"Who does?" grunted the doctor. Vivyan studied him, wondering if this could possibly be his new friend. He felt horribly shaken. Maybe this man was to prepare him to go on to a new place?

"Lie down," the doctor told him. Vivyan felt the flash of an injector. Suddenly he was very frightened. There was a danger he'd been warned against, a thing that was not allowed. If this man was not a friend he had done something very wrong. How had

this happened? He had been trapped. Bad.

But then he remembered that there was some way to be all right, something his friends had fixed in case of trouble. He must relax. Peacefulness was the key. He lay quietly breathing the wet cave air, not looking or listening. But it was hard to be peaceful here. Sealmen were coming through, hooting at the sick ones on the seaweed who roused themselves and hooted back. Shouting, stamping, more hooting. Something seemed to be happening. A sealman shook a laser at the doctor, laughing in a wild yowling way. The doctor grunted, doing something to the seal-baby. Vivyan felt dizzy and unclear. In a moment he would leave this place.

But white-ringed eyes were over him. Cox.

"Now. Talk. How much have you passed your contact here?"

Vivyan could only stare, the words meant nothing. Nantli's face appeared, saying gently, "Don't be frightened, Vivyan. Just tell us. You did talk to your friend about me, didn't you?"

The shutter-thing in Vivyan's brain seemed to be sliding, melting.

"Oh yes." His lips felt floppy.

"That's right. And Captain Palcay, did you talk about him?"

"Pal, Palcay?" Vivyan mumbled. The brown man made a noise.

"The spacer you were with at Flor's, the one who got so drunk. Did you tell your friend about that?"

Vivyan could not follow her clearly but at the words "tell your friend" he nodded his head, yes. Cox snarled.

"And have you told him you've seen Cox here?"

Vivyan felt a sudden jar inside him

as though he had missed a step. The brown man—had he ever? This was very peculiar. Frightening. He turned his head to meet the pale ringed eyes.

"Cox?"

"Not Cox!" the brown man said furiously. "Cancoxtlan. *Cancoxtlan!* Remember yourself, Vivyan of Atlixco, son of Tlaara."

"My mother was raped and butchered by the rebels," Vivyan heard his voice saying in a weird flat tone. The words meant nothing only pain. "They burned my father alive and all my family. The shrikes ate their bodies. My pony too," he began to sob. "Butchers. Traitors. You're hurting me, it hurts—"

The brown face watched him, suddenly still. Then Cox said heavily, "Yes, Princes get killed. Even good kind princes who weren't responsible, only blind. They get killed too . . . I couldn't make them see, Vivyan. At the end I couldn't even get to them in time."

"We were so happy," Vivyan wept, "We were peaceful and beautiful."

"You were five years old," said Cox. "Didn't anybody ever tell you what we'd done to the Atlixcans? The real Atlixcans? Two centuries of happiness for Terran princes, two centuries of slavery—the debt got paid, Vivyan."

A sealman ran up uttering barking cries. Cox turned to him.

"Oh god, they're going ahead," Nantli exclaimed. "Cox—"

"All the way," Cox said. He turned back and gripped Vivyan's head. "They lied to you, can you understand? *We* were wrong. *We* were the butchers. The Empire, us. We're fighting it now, Vivyan. You've got to come with us, it's your duty. We can use you in place,

in your police net—"

One of the big sealmen had come up and grabbed Cox's shoulder. Vivyan heard Nantli saying something and suddenly the white eyes had left him, they were all gone. Other sealmen and Terrans ran through, but no one bothered him. He lay with his head whirling and hurting, wondering if it had been all right. His lips seemed to have spoken by themselves, as they did when he was with his friend. Maybe it was all right. But he must get out of here as soon as he could stand up.

He drowsed a little and then more sealmen were all around him, hooting, groaning, smelling of burnt flesh and blood. A body bumped him. It was a Terran in a wetsuit oozing blood. The man slumped down, yelling, "Hey Doc, you gloomy sod, we got the goddamn transmitters. You bloody pervert! Doc," he shouted, "the 'Tlixcan ships are coming in, how about that you gutless mother?"

"They'll burn the planet," the doctor told him. "Cut that off so you can fry clean."

He hauled the man away. Vivyan saw that the passage was now clear. Next minute he was out and running back the way he had come.

His memory was perfect, although he felt a little ill. All he had to do was let his feet carry him while his eyes and ears kept watch. Twice he ducked into side tunnels while sealmen went by with their wounded. Then he was at the place where many tunnels met, where they had removed his blindfold trusting to the maze. Vivyan simply closed his eyes and let his body guide him back. Turn, rough place to the left, bend his head, cool air on his right side, the natural mechanism within him un-

spooled its perfect tape. He only had to hide once more. These passages seemed to be unused.

Presently he was through the inner pool and into the last dark tunnel undersea. This was easier yet, he could hear the water churning under the reef and he ran stooped in the darkness, longing to be out in the clean water, away from this peaceless place. Surely they would take him away now to a new place, after he had given all these things to his friend? He reached the cavern. No lantern now. That didn't matter, Vivyan knew exactly where to dive, how to come up under the reef. He kicked powerfully down into blackness, thinking he must be sure to remember everything. This must be a secret way to the caves, it would be a wonderful surprise.

In a moment he had surfaced and marked the horizon and the stars. There seemed to be fires on the shore. He began to swim eagerly, feeling marvellous now. This would be his best yet. If only the name *Cancoxtlan* didn't trouble his head . . . but he would forget about that, he felt sure. Peace flooded him as he saw the far light of his friend's house by the cove.

"**N**O ONE NOTICED he had gone," the woman told the newsman. "The fight for the Enclave had started and *Cancoxtlan* was there. When the Terrans broke in through the reef tunnel we managed to blow the section between the hospital and the armory. They got the wounded, of course, and Doctor Vose. And Nantli. But it had no effect." Her scarred face was impassive. "Cox wouldn't surrender to save Nantli, she wouldn't have wanted that. The raid diverted one of their core

units."

They watched Vivyan's tall figure moving aimlessly along the terrace, glancing in the water. Seen from behind he looked older, stooped under the striking black hair.

"The spacers were with us, did you know that?" The woman was suddenly voluble. "Oh yes, even the officers. When the cruiser from Atlixco showed up they all came in." She grimaced. "Three days before, we intercepted a Space Command signal about combating disaffection. Empires grow old and foolish. Even the revolt on Horl didn't wake them up. We'll have Horl next."

She checked herself then. They saw Vivyan glance round quickly and move over to the wall.

"We found him wandering, afterwards," the woman went on more quietly. "*Cancoxtlan*'s brother, after all . . . He never understood what he'd done. We think now he was basically retarded, in addition to the conditioning they'd put him through. Nothing reached . . . You've heard of idiot savants? He's very gentle and that smile, one doesn't realise."

The newsman remembered his own gut response to the gentle stranger and shuddered. Exquisite tool of empire. A deadly child.

Vivyan had halted before a peculiar carving in an alcove. The newsman frowned. A Terran eagle, here? The boy-man seemed to be whispering to it.

"He carved it himself. Cox let him keep it. What does it matter now?" The woman bowed her bleak head. "Listen."

By a trick in the wall structure the newsman could hear perfectly what

(Continued on page 79)

BOHASSIAN LEARNS

The birth experience must be frightening for any baby . . . but how much worse might it be for a baby gifted with unusual mental powers?

WILLIAM ROTSLER

BOHASSIAN was being born and he didn't like it. Everything had been warm and safe and he had heard things, saw images, felt clusters of emotions moving around him, and suddenly it was chaos. There was pain, then more pain, then a rhythm of pain, then a bursting, a moving, a turning and an explosion of light.

Pain.

Incredible pain.

Bohassian lashed out in anger and there were screams and terrible images in his head but still the pain did not stop, but it ebbed away slowly. Bohassian realized he was smaller now, that somehow he had cast away the large, warm protective shell, or had been rejected by it. But he was small and weak on the outside so he protected himself by moving the others away.

He lay there, soaking up images and light and ideas from this bright, big world. When he could, Bohassian went into the minds of others, breathing in incoherent images, hearing sounds and cries and sobbing.

He tried sorting out the sights from

the sounds and the images from the thoughts. It was all very confusing. The minds seemed chaotic and frightened.

They were all afraid of him.

The figures in pale green, with their faces and heads wrapped, cowered against the flatness of the confining chamber. Bohassian reached beyond the chamber and felt the minds of others. The others were not frightened at first, then they became frightened and the cool thoughts jumbled and melted and boiled.

Bohassian looked into the mind of the place from which he had come, into the other part of him, into the discarded/rejected part.

Mother.

The giver of life.

She had been a safe place and then she had thrust him out. He looked into her mind and saw that she had wanted to thrust him out, that she thought it was right to thrust him out into the other place. Bohassian went deeper into her and twisted something petulantly.

The mother started to scream and

went limp.

Bohassian moved among the minds around him, moving into the complex chambers of their minds, gathering information without prejudice, soaking up concepts, colors, words, acts, emotions. Wild fantasy and accomplished fact were simply images of differing textures.

Bohassian learned.

That figure was relatively cool, clinical, wanting to reach out and touch but was held back by the command of another figure whose mind was green snakes and dark oily ripples. That one was dazed, with fragments of thoughts spraying out like a crushed bouquet: *wet... red... terrible... push... mother... monster... crush...*

Bohassian felt danger and twisted something dark in the mind and the figure fell and was quiet, even in the mind.

Bohassian learned.

He saw that images had labels and were called words. Mother. Baby. Fear. Death. Hospital. Help. Doctor. Nurse. Blood. Kill. Green. Love.

Bohassian stopped when he learned love. It was the small figure in green. He brought it forth, towards him. It moved jerkily but Bohassian saw less fear in its mind than the others.

It felt pity and wanted to help. Bohassian held its mind firmly, ready to strike, but let it do its love help. His frail body was raised and moved slightly and he became aware of a piece of himself attached to the life giver.

The mind of the green figure spoke: *We must cut away the umbilical.*

No.

Yes. It is necessary.

Why?

To give you freedom. You needed it

when you were inside and now you no longer need it.

Cut it.

It will hurt. You must not hurt me when I hurt you. It is necessary.

Bohassian looked into the mind of the green figure and saw that it believed it to be true. There are many things I do not know, thought Bohassian.

Cut.

There was pain and Bohassian pressed the other green figures against the wall and the green figure holding him gasped.

It is done.

I am free?

Yes, but you must not hurt people.

Why?

Because they are weaker than you.

But they/you are large and move. They want to hurt me.

They are frightened. You frightened them. They fear the unknown.

"Kill it!" The tall green figure against the wall made noises. Bohassian quieted him and he fell back.

And you?

I fear you, too. You are different. But I cannot kill.

That one would kill.

The figure in green looked at the crumpled figures against the flatness. "Yes. They do not understand." *Pity. They are afraid of fear.*

You make two images. They are different, but alike.

I think. I speak. Sometimes people speak different images than they think.

Bohassian felt other minds coming closer. Disturbed minds. Someone made a loud noise. Bohassian made them stop and some fell.

Why do they come?

They are curious. They come to help

... or to hurt ...

I learn. They will not hurt me.

"I will take care of you." Pity. Love.
Mother. Protection. Hold.

I will not hurt you.

I will pick you up. You must be washed and fed. But not hurt.

You may hold me. I do not fear you.
The others will not hurt me.

The nurse picked up Bohassian and they moved out of the chamber. There were long chambers filled with people. Some were lying down and some were staring with wide eyes. Bohassian kept them back. One moved to grab, his mind a whirl of blackness, but Bohassian twisted and he fell.

There was a dark grayness in the mind of the nurse, a sadness and hurt. But she carried Bohassian to a chamber and washed him. The water felt good and the oil was pleasant. There was much noise and Bohassian made it quiet.

Bohassian learned as he lay there.

The minds of people were very confused, streaked through with clarity and logic. But there was much fear. Fear was danger for Bohassian so he kept it away.

The figure in green held him and said *Food* and gave him a sweet, warm whiteness. It was good and Bohassian rested.

There was much to learn. Bohassian became aware of many small formless minds around him, each in a small

body such as his, but each a weak and fragile being. Bohassian went into their minds but found them almost blank, only vague whorls of light and color and blurrings.

Bohassian let his body rest and not move as his mind moved lazily around in circles, touching the image makers in chambers nearby. They cringed and sometimes screamed as he entered them. One mind turned black and curled into a tiny chamber within itself. Bohassian poked at it curiously but it was without interest.

There was much to learn, Bohassian thought. There are images in the minds I touch. Skies. Trees. Tall things. Food. Other life forms, from very small to very large. Colors. Millions upon millions of image makers.

I will touch them all, Bohassian thought. I must learn.

—William Rotsler

(Continued from page 76)

Vivyan was whispering.

"He says his name is Keller of Out-planet News. He didn't tell his first name. He says he came from Aldebaran Sector on the *Komarov* to interview the traitor Prince Cancaxtlan. He is about one meter eighty, medium build, grey hair and eyes. He has a scar on his right earlobe and his timer is forty-five units ahead of planet time ..."

—James Tiptree, Jr.

COMING IN AMAZING JOHN BRUNNER'S GREATEST NOVEL— THE WRONG END OF TIME

Pg Wyal was a regular contributor to the New York rock paper, Crawdaddy, during its brief second incarnation, and is now living in the San Francisco Bay Area, where, he tells us, the living is easier. He's obviously been to one of the "legendary" border towns of our era; the story which follows contains in its alien description a ring of truth. Perhaps his original title tells it all: "I'm Going Back To New York City/I Think I've Had About Enough"...

BORDER TOWN

PG WYAL

IT WAS a border town. That says it all.

The border was like a semi-permeable membrane: wealth flowed only one way. First there were the rich, the monied patrons of local shops and industries. With their arrogance, their alien finery, the contumely of those who sit righteous and smug at the apex of a pyramid, they did not engender love among the people who were as dependent upon them as tapeworms.

Of course, the tapeworms were bitter.

"Give me two of those—no, idiot, *those!*" said the man from Delta Signus IV. The little yellow being behind the counter lifted two violet gems in his spider's hands and set them on the glass top. The violet stones were faceted on a hundred planes, and shattered light into a hundred spectral fragments.

"Five million Wattouri, *sembi*," said the shopkeeper.

I can work him down! "Three million."

"No, *sembi*; they cost nearly that much for me. One must pay the stated

price."

Liar! "I'll pay four thousand wattouri, *semba*." He used the suffix for children or social inferiors. "And I won't pay another watt."

"It was a border town, and the deceptions were manifold. The bargain was clinched; the shopkeeper needed cash, his offspring were many, and his patience slight. He accepted the offer. Above all else, his people were pragmatists.

And above all, the man from Delta Signus IV was shrewd at bargains.

There's the conflict.

Way, way out (mind's sinews snap), where stars rain in cascades of color through glittering, unshifting spacial skies, and clouds of glory lead abstract angels to no rest you'd care for, the pirate ship squatted in isolated content. And thieves inside, shielded from the outspace cold by transient and very misleading warm, revelled in contempt.

"Haw!" gloated Blind Sam.

"Heh!" snickered Epsilon Tao.

"Ho!" sneered Queer Sal.

Heaped on a table (which the thugs were heaped around) was a sparkling mountain of gold and jewels. That's right—gold and jewels!

The gold was in the printed micro-circuitry, the jewels in the little nodes of crystal that the gold circuits laced and embraced like a spider's sneaky snare.

"What a haul!" boasted Queer Sal, rubbing her hip-high patent-leather boots with greedy intensity.

"Yeah!" rejoined Blind Sam, winking his TV lenses ribaldly at Queer Sal.

"A mint!" chortled Epsilon Tao, playing pickupstix and reading the *I Ching* for good and ungood omens or wishes.

And then their outlaw faces darkened.

"A mint," declared Blind Sam woe-fully, "but no bank to cash it in. Time without tears—useless."

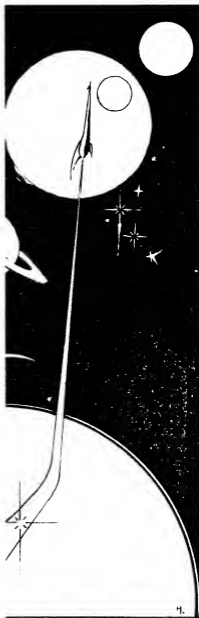
"We need a fence," suggested Queer Sal. "A Shylock to weigh in avoirdupois and weigh out troy."

And then, though their faces stayed dark, Blind Sam started at his sudden insight, and spoke out of his tunnel. "Light!" The faces of Epsilon Tao and Queer Sal turned hopefully to him, their eyes bright as his lenses. "I know a place! Better than legendary Juarez or Tijuana! A world where one may deal the wheels and profit by the spin!"

So he told them its name; and they moved out among the stars toward its place. . . .

Which brought the kettle to a fine fast froth.

"... I have phase-makers and pace-setters," whispered the stranger in a conspiratorial voice, sharp and sneaky. She wore the clothes of a leather de-



viate, a plastic freak.

The little yellow man behind the counter adjusted green glasses on his double-bridged nose. "They will have to be inspected, *semba*." He used the denigrating suffix, as one does in dealing with inferior space-flotsam such as facing him. "One cannot buy unseen and untested goods." He leaned close. "However—if they are good, well made, within the normal standards—I can fix you (*singular*) a satisfying price." A membrane nictitated in a wink.

"*Sembi*," obsequiesced the muscular female, "I would be done honor. When may I present the articles in question to your generous and honest scrutiny?"

"Ah," hissed the spindly shopkeeper, "you must here deal with an intermediary—a middleman, so to speak. You see," he said with downcast green eyes, "we have an independent buyer. A person who specializes in unorthodox transactions. Here—" he slid a piece of paper across the glass, "this is the gentleman's address. He is available at your convenience."

"I am grateful. May the stars show you kindnesses, and fortune be your slave."

"Likewise, *semba*; good afternoon." The little merchant turned to his wares, and Queer Sal tramped out the door.

Triple suns (red blob, yellow lightbulb, white arclamp) illuminated the little scrap in her hand with triply unlovely glare; three frequencies, all wrong for the human retina, jumbled and reflected inside her eye. Everything looked blurred and unfocused, bright fogs and dazzling clouds. She squinted, cursing to herself, and read:

SEMBI CUPRIU NARCO,
DEALER IN RARE AND EX-

QUISITE ITEMS

19980 AVENID REVOLUCION-
NO, APT. 4

The suns were in her eyes, confusion in her hoodlum brain. She hailed a pedicab, and gave the swarthy yellow peon the address. He humped down to his painful task, and drab streets, painted bright but worn dull by poverty, began to ripple and shift across her troubled vision. Alleys and crossstreets, moving yellow mantis-figures of the natives, cars and wagons, bright uncertain shapes, flowed in and out of seeing, to be replaced by more shapes equally undefined and unfamiliar. Screaming children, yellow stickman prostitutes leaning against walls plastered with torn posters, dogs urinating on everything, hustlers and pimps, the odor of rotting semen, filthy-sick bums, crippled old men—everything blended into anarchy and bright disorientation. The planet was not very new to human cognizance—it just possessed nothing to make it worth improving. Settled long ago by colonizers of a vanished civilization, it remained as the final pitiful vestige of a culture which hadn't made the grade. Changed by time and progress, wars and revolution, it still maintained the basic characteristics of a colonial society, a colonial mentality. And long ago, the greater universe had explored all the possibilities, all the virtues, all the evils of this type of culture—and discarded it. Now the little world on the outskirts of the Pleiades drifted far from the mainstream, good for nothing but cultural exploitation. All its dreams were dead.

And it was a border town. . . .

Queer Sal climbed out of the pedicab, stuffed an indeterminate amount of local coinage into the surprised

driver's hand, and started to cross the street.

"Watch out *sembi*! You will be run over!"

She stepped back from the whirling noisiness of the street. The pedicab driver had warned her just in time. Cars—mostly owned by foreigners or rich merchants—rushed vaguely through the street. She couldn't spot them with her degraded vision. "That's a tollway, *sembi*. For the rich. They drive fast." He peddled off.

For the rich. The thought, and the little thoughts underneath it, sounded good in her brain. For the rich—fine leather, pearl-handled whips, luxury, gourmet meals, excursions to pleasure worlds. . . . It all glittered in her mind like a cache of stolen electronics. She felt in the lip of her boot for the small pouch she was going to show Cupriu Narco, dealer of items and persons *non gratis*.

She started walking southward. Her bootheel lanced a piece of trash; she kicked it off. She slipped in some animal excretion; she stopped to scrape the sole more or less clean. Passing through a shadow, she noticed in an instant of visual clarity that the sidewalk was cracked, the plaster walls of the houses dirty and often unpainted, and any wall, fence, or other elevation was crusted with bird droppings. The traces of all flying creatures are identical—little concentrated puddles of white urea with an egg-yolk center of gray. This seemed to be the town's primary decoration. She flashed out again into the sunlight, and the momentary perceptions shattered, like a smashed crystal. Form faded into shimmering nebulae of formlessness.

A doorway with the number 19980.

She twisted the handle. Creaking hinges; muted voices from the darkness now exposed.

"*Sembi*?" cracked an old voice, in fear.

Queer Sal muttered into the darkness. "I wish to see *sembi* Cupriu Narco. I have important business."

The old voice laughed high-pitched. "Business? Business? The fine lady has 'business' with *sembi-ii*! Cupriu!" Laughter in the cave.

Darkness presently resolved into dim yellow lampglow. She could see five or six thin shapes sitting around a table with mean portions of food upon it. The lamp was in the table's center, and cast light on the alien faces, shadow on the alien backs. They glowed, surreal eetee scarecrows.

"I have business . . ." she repeated. "With Cupriu Narco."

"That jakal Cupriu is down the hall—there—through the first door to your left, then through the empty room and the next door. . . . You'll know him by the stink." The yellow old woman's features wrinkled in senile amusement.

The heat, the tortured outside light, had penetrated, blended with this final shock, and muted Sal's awareness. She felt herself drift, as in a waking dream, towards the indicated hallway. She almost seemed to levitate . . . through a greaser doorway, down a filthy chink hall, through another nigger door, around a gook corner, and into a dirty mex bedroom. A yellow swapman hunkered in filth—maybe his own filth, she thought. The native looked up at her with slit pupils in lichen-green irises, measuring. "*Sembi*?" he whispered.

Unreal, Sal said, "Nanophasers.

Germanium-silicon-ruby-gold. The best. Also rectifiers, for thinktalk machines."

"You have all kinds? How many chipfilms?"

"We've got maybe 500 million, all kinds, most one hundred to five hundred layers. Photo-etched, layer-layer." She fingered the pouch out of her boot and spilled a few chips on the table. They were as tiny and insubstantial as gold glitter. "They cost five Kwattouri apiece just to manufacture," she added.

"Five Kwattouri," mumbled the yellow spider. He squinted at her. "How did you (*plural*) . . . obtain them?"

"We have a supplier," Sal said. "We can get more . . . as we wish."

The yellow spiderman picked tools and instruments out of the rubbish. He began to fiddle with a few of the chips. Sal leaned against a dirt-smeared wall and fumigated the room with cigarette smoke. The air became gray, the yellow lamp dim.

Suddenly the thin being stared at the masculine woman sharply. "Just where did you (*plural*) get these goods?"

Something in the timbre of his voice, the intensity of his alien eyes, compelled an honest answer. "We took 'em off an El Guild freighter. From Maximum Security. It was like taking blood from a vampire, but—"

"Just tell me," interrupted Narco, "was there any loss of life?"

Again, she felt an odd compulsion to reply sincerely. "Not any that I know of. But the freighter's defenses automatically evacuated the compartments . . . somebody might not have made it to a cabin in time. . . . The El Guild doesn't fool around. But neither do

we." Her cigarette glowed brighter in the gathering gloom.

"And how do you know you can trust me?" His voice was like crackling cellophane.

Queer Sal jumped. "I don't. I don't even know why I told you."

"You may learn. However, you should know something about your, ah, merchandise."

"What?" The cigarette glowed a little less cheerfully.

"These circuits—they aren't normal. That is, they aren't for normal use. They have unusually high capacitances—and modify signals in rather unexpected ways."

"So?"

"They are useless for ordinary use. They just don't fit into normal circuitry."

Queer Sal's cigarette flamed out. "What the hell does that mean? All this junk is—useless? specialized? worthless?"

Cupriu Narco's eyes hooded over. Nictitating films slid over the protruding eyeballs, and dulled their hypnotic green to a wet gray. The color of smoke. "They are worthless for ordinary use. But that doesn't mean they are entirely without value. They may have certain utility beyond computers and everyday electronics. Say, in complicated cybernetic systems which are . . . frowned upon." He spoke more to himself than to Sal.

"A price? Anything. We've got to get rid of this stuff."

"I realize your impatience," said Cupriu. "But give me some time. I shall have to make certain contacts . . . parties other than my valueless self must examine the materials and determine their . . . value. Perhaps if you (*plural*)

would return tomorrow, *sembi*, at say, noon? Excellent, *sembi*. . . . I will see you (*singular*) to the door. . . ."

Queer Sal, followed by Blind Sam (very dizzy from the light in his multiple TV eyes), and flanked by Epsilon Tao, lonely for his tinkertoy prophets, knocked boldly on the street door.

Knocked again.

And again. When there was no answer, Queer Sal wrenched at the handle. The door creaked open.

"The light's out—must be nobody's home," said Sal. She barged in, and the others barged after her. The ante-room was empty; even the table was gone.

"Cupriu!" Sal yelled. She pushed her way through the door and into the dirty hall. "Cupriu, are you inside?"

A brittle whisper rustled through the warm air. "Yes, lady. In the same room." They followed the faint crackle of Cupriu's voice down the hall, through the left door, across an empty room (empty save for old papers and decaying trash), and into the less than august presence of Cupriu Narco, a pile of sticks dunked in rancid margarine.

There were two men with him, sitting on chairs that hadn't been there yesterday. One, Sal recognized as the shopkeeper, a yellow figure somewhat less emaciated than the rest. But the other—

"*Sembi*, this gentleman, whom you will recognize as one of your own generous kind, is Mr. Lionel Puto, a wealthy trader, originally from Terra her glorious self, but now residing on Delta Signus IV."

An exchange of glad handshakes.

"—And of course, the gentleman on my right, *Sembi* Agglu Tinat, who is of my own race, you have previously

had the honor of encountering."

More handshaking.

"And those who accompany yourself?"

Sal responded, "This lump with the wires and machinery is Blind Sam. He's Epsilon Tao." The latter had discovered some sticks on the floor, and was now toying contentedly with them.

A volley of handshaking.

"And now, ladies and gentlemen, we should pursue our business." Chairs were offered and accepted. Electric lights suddenly filled the room with life, reality. Blind Sam's electric irises contracted to accomodate the light. Epsilon Tao's nimble fingers quickened at their fortune manipulations.

"What about the cops?" asked Sal, her voice biting hard.

Agglu Tinat, the shopkeeper, spoke loudest: "We have made certain adjustments . . . completely within the normal pattern, of course. Certain sensitive individuals have been rendered financially disinterested."

"The doors are wide," quoted Epsilon Tao, "and the traveller is hurrying. Safety among friends."

"I beg your pardon?" said Lionel Puto, the man from Delta Signus IV. He seemed to radiate some kind of crafty suspicion. His voice cut sharply through the humid air, lancing with points of logic.

"Astrology stuff," replied Sal. "Strictly crap, but he's the best spotter in the business. Kind of a knack he has."

"I see," said Puto.

"That's very nice," said Cupriu, "but I think we should adhere to business. You have, I believe, certain objects—"

"Micro El," Sal snapped. "Phasers, pace-setters, multi-channel rectifiers—"

"—Which are useless," continued Cupriu, unflustered, "for ordinary usage. They are, in fact, unique . . . a fact which shouldn't impede this transaction too much, for what is unique in design is unique in function."

"An astute observation, Cupriu," the shopkeeper said.

"A merely obvious one," replied Cupriu, his spider hands folded peacefully. "A simple truism, intended to enlighten certain simplistic persons." His green eyes flashed briefly at Sal and her entourage. Epsilon Tao coughed, but Sal just sneered.

Lionel Puto cleared his throat. "Really, this is dragging on—the General will be—"

"Please," interrupted Cupriu. "We must establish a Mood. An aura of rational tranquility and detachment. It is an essential preliminary to all business or art."

"I only want to make a deal," replied Lionel, nasally whining.

"We must remain practical," announced the shopkeeper.

"We're in a hurry," Sal warned.

"We shall negotiate a compromise," hissed Cupriu Narco, smoothing ruffled feathers and scales. "Are there any suggestions as to the disputed commodity's value. . . ?"

IT WAS a border planet, where cultures clashed. But it was less a clash than a slow edging out, an overwhelming of one world by another. The intrusion was resented, resented all the more for the fact that it was inevitable. The strongest survive, in social as well as biological organisms. But that does not mean the survivor will be happy, or the ruined resigned.

General Balzo Fueg', imperial and

archaic, was parsecs from resigned.

"There has to be a way, there has to!" His fist, yellow bananas, freakishly heavy, collided violently with the tabletop. His subordinates trembled with the concussion. "We have put up with certain parties' indiscretions too long! Why must our race, with a heritage nobler than the gold these jackals rob us of, suffer the indignity of—slavery! Yes, honorable companions, slavery!" With the congenital indirection of his kind, he did not specifically name his antagonists. Even a General has morals, surprisingly. It's just that the logic—the social logic of "morality"—is internal, not external.

"My master," rasped an officer at the table's most distant edge, lacking the dignity of time's senile weight, "perhaps we look at the problem in an incorrect hue. Mighty *Nectahr* may shine hottest, lovely *Solahr* most pleasingly—but tiny and nimble *Blankahr* is brighter and most intense. We should light our logic with *Blankahr's* brilliant blaze, and perhaps approach the problem from a slightly alternate, though assuredly no superior, angle. Incident to this angle, and the accompanying alteration in luminescence, I would suggest approaching our problem from the orbital felicity of cooperation, not conflict."

"Sunbright your analogy may indeed be, but your ultimate reasoning is opaque," said the General.

"Simplifying, then," answered the lieutenant, "I summarize: If you cannot beat the discussed, join them."

Rage tinted Balzo's gross features orange. "That's treason! We shall be no stooge, no minor satellite! You speak subversion! That's—guards! *Guards!*"

The lieutenant was escorted from the room.

"The chair," announced the General in a tone of outrage, "is open to suggestions—if they are respectably patriotic."

The suggestions were respectable, patriotic, and futile.

Unexpectedly, Sal said, "Maybe the military would be interested. There might be something in this pile of precious junk they could make a bomb of, or something." The discussion had been swamped in oppositely polarized proposals, and sank in a froth of oily haggling.

Cupriu glanced at the human from Delta Signus, then back at Sal. "The military, *sembi*, is the last party we wish to notify of our . . . acquisition. The military is openly hostile to piracy." Cupriu's green eyes were wide, the pupils dilated in fear. A fear which, if closely examined, would have borne out false, theatrical.

"But we didn't . . . ah, steal from a *Ching'r* ship. The El Guild functions independently—a private business."

"A private monopoly," corrected Cupriu. "Monopoly engenders syndicalism. Is it not possible that the El Guild is in fact part of a vast syndic? And, too, is it not said currently that the business of Government is—business?"

Sal knitted her eyebrows and rubbed her boots nervously. The little spider had a good point. "I dunno nothing about politics. All I know is that we took some micro-el off an El Guild ship, and as far as I know, the El Guild doesn't have anything to do with the local potentates. If they do, that's tough. If they don't—and you ought to

know—maybe we can peddle these lemons—" she picked up a handful of gold sand and let it dribble through her gnarled, bony fingers, "and get the hell out of here."

Blind Sam leered at her with f/25.0 hungry eyes. "And head for Sodomica—I heard it's quite a place, if you got dough."

"Dough," mumbled Sal. "That's all I want. One place is the same as another, to me." She looked pleadingly at Cupriu, appealingly at the little shopkeeper, and curiously at Lionel Puto. She stared at Puto, a long lesbian look. "What's in this for you? Same as me?"

Lionel Puto ran normal fingers athrough average brown hair. His statistically median brown eyes shimmered moistly in their shrewd, squinting sockets. "I am an entrepreneur—a wheeler and dealer, a taker of calculated risks. The risks do not appeal to me—but the profits do. In this case, I act as a financier—for *sembi* Cupriu and *semba* whatsisname, here, haven't the capital to pay you for your greed. Lost in the past, the inheritors starve."

Sal, unfocused, said, "I don't get it." Some of the *Ching'r* personality traits seemed to stick to the Delta Signian. He spoke in circles and links of circles.

"I mean I'm financing their operation. They don't have the money. I'll get back my investment, plus thirty percent of the sale price."

"But we have to get back our own investment. That's about 100 billion Kwattouri, plus travel allotments and hardship pay. . . . And your offer just doesn't cover it."

Cupriu's eyes had been filmed over; suddenly they unfilmed, and he spoke in a detached voice: "Perhaps individ-

ual emotion can overcome social law. I know the General is a stout patriot—foreign to his times. Such a man is bitter. If we informed him of the method by which our goods were obtained—he might see his needs increased, and therefore their value enhanced. Thus could we demand a higher toll on the bridge between availability and need. . . .”

“Cupriu,” roared the General, “you are a rank scoundrel, a festering, pus-dripping blemish against the sacred white bosom of Ching’r. I admire you for your courage, and detest you for your actions. It grieves me infinitely that expediency calls me to foul conspiracy in your wretched ways. I shall reimburse you for 150 billion Kwattouri, and not a microwatt more. Now get thee hence from my company, lest I should decide to suffer your existence no longer.”

“*Sembi*, you are generous; *sembi*, all Ching’r shall thank you; *sembi* . . . *sembi* . . .”

“ . . . The pillars are shaking. Truth is fiction. Holocaust awaits.” Epsilon Tao tattled, and rattled his sticks in dismay.

“Don’t listen to him,” griped Sal. “He’s just a poor mystical nut. He hasn’t predicted anything since the Great Big Depression of 3450. And the economists had predicted that ten years before. When the Power Market exploded, the only one who was surprised was Epsilon—he never expected one of his predictions to come true.”

“That,” reflected Cupriu, taking subliminal green eyes off Epsilon’s captive face, “was just before the Interplanetary Kwattouri was adopted as

the economic standard. It’s funny how historical crisis results in economic reform.” Speaking which words, he completed the credit transaction, punching the *Tally* button on his Bank computer console. “I believe the sum is correct?”

Sal squinted at the card. “Exactly 131,563,887,440 Kwattouri and some 1,890 Waseci in change. Perfect. Is the General satisfied?”

“Of that, *sembi*, I have no way of knowing.” Cupriu folded his card (a nice five percent) into his new tunic. He avoided looking at Epsilon Tao. “May the stars wink at you. . . .”

“And fortune be your whore!” Sal grinned.

In threes, they parted.

“Worthless!” screamed General Balzo Fueg’. “*Equisahri* excrescence! Good for melting down for the plastic! Utterly valueless to the People’s Republic of Ching’r! Get them out of my sight—throw them into Lake Mierd! Scoundrels! Thieves! Children of socially diseased virgins! Out, out, out!”

The room cleared like a flushed toilet, except for Cupriu Narco, whose continued presence had been requested by the General himself.

“Assassin! What have you to say for yourself, what pusillanimous excuse, what paramount lie?!”

Cupriu stood with his yellow head hanging shamefully. “I am the foulest, basest failure. I should be punished.” It was all he could say; ritual provided no alternative.

“You should be garroted! You should be lynched! May the stars forgive me for using such filthy language, but the—*Terrans*!—should only hang with you. You have sold me—” his

gross military fingers scooped up a mound of yellow dust, "garbage! manure! Worthless, specialized *trash!* As he uttered the last word, his hand smashed down on the table. It cracked.

"Do you know what this dirt is for, Cupriu Narco, son of parasites? Do you know?"

The swapman's hands hung limp and empty.

"For—" The General's voice choked off, impotent.

"I am a disgrace to the Chosen Race," peeped Cupriu.

"You are the progeny of frogs! The feces of scavengers! The dregs of the sewer! You are ruination itself! *Get out of my sight and don't come back!*"

As his roar subsided, so did the General, into his contour foam chair. Cupriu Narco sneaked out the door and into oblivion. Idly, almost abstractedly (as if a General could abstract!), Balzo Fueg' poured gold-dust back and forth in his hands. After a moment, he dropped the powder on the carpeted floor. Hidden in a storeroom, somewhere underground and totally inaccessible, was five kilos of the priceless stuff, billions of tiny microchip fortunes.

"For this I have depleted the treasury." He closed his frog eyes in mortification.

"For an authentic Terran Boyscout combination toothbrush, bumwipe, psychedelic stimulator, laser whittling knife, and ultrasonic joy-vibrator."

And he cried thick salty tears.

Lionel Puto's weasely eyes twinkled at Agglu Tinat, across the glass counter.

"... It all works out perfectly. The General got what he thought he wanted, those idiotic thieves got what

they deserved—and we got the goodies!"

"Your business acumen is both admirable and exemplary," reflected Agglu. "Blame can be neither traced nor fixed." He tapped a needle finger on the glass. The display beneath was sumptuous, a spectrum of gems on soft black velvet. There were no prices—none stated.

"I bribed the Bank programmer," said Puto, "to transfer all Sal's account into ours—there's no record outside the computer except her credit card . . . which is after all merely a plastic print-out, nothing intended to be permanent. She'll be arrested as soon as she tries to cash for any large amount—the Galactic computer network will scream *tilt!*"

Agglu's membranes half-nictitated in shrewd appreciation. "I'm afraid our friends may never get the chance. As a favor to a certain high military personage, with whom we have lately dealt, one Cupriu Narco committed an indiscretion . . . he exercised his racial gift for subliminal control, hypnotic indirection and persuasion, and placed a psychic shroud over a criminal eye."

"You mean he blinded the spotter, Epsilon Tao?"

"It may be stated thus with precision."

"But what for?"

Agglu smiled, double rows of white slivers. "To insure the continuing security and safety of the People's Republic's ships and personnel. Because hornets may strike more tarantulas than one." The smile became a leer.

"It seems a venomous sort of insurance," said Lionel, frowning, honorable among thieves, "to sterilize their futures so."

"Then we are surely vipers, both—and our venom preserves us. That is business. In any transaction, over-all energy is lost. All parties cannot profit—only *seem* to profit. One cannot gain energy—only lose it. That is entropy. Business is the science of minimizing entropy." He tapped the gem case, and said nothing more.

Lionel stared into the leering alien features. His frown deepened, darkened, and parted in a guttural growl. "What's that supposed to mean?"

Sharp teeth.

"What are you pulling?"

Razor whiteness.

"Answer me!" barked Lionel—and wheeled at a noise from the door.

Agglu's grin cracked open and words drooled out. "You might call me a border guard." He hissed in laughter.

The shop filled with Military Police, yellow insects in black-silver uniforms. "You are under arrest!" shouted a Captain. Agglu's grin vanished as the officer spoke. His eyes filmed over completely.

The officer had used the plural form of 'you.'

It was a border town, and the masks were many.

Out in the madhouse light of triple suns, blinded and stumbling, Sal said to Epsilon Tao, "What should our next job be?"

Epsilon's tongue tangled in his teeth. "Sal, I can't think of a thing. Maybe I'm the best spotter—but there doesn't seem to be anything to spot."

"It's a good thing you were thrown out of the Esp Guild," Sal said, feeling her way along a brick wall. The suns were hot on all their brows, and triple calamity stalked them. Slowly, they

groped toward their ship, through the maze streets of Ching'r Poli, a hostile border town.

"What was it we sold them?" Blind Sam telegraphed.

"I dunno," Sal replied, "and don't care. Some sort of special EI job—probably for some local jobber Rimward. You never know what you're going to get."

Epsilon Tao clutched his sticks agitatedly. "Sal, Queer dear Sal, I think we've goofed. I can't spot, I can't spot anything. Sal, O Sal, if I can't spot it, it ain't there. Sal, what've we done?"

"You're just nervous, Epsi. It's that stupid hobby of yours—*taxi-taxi!*"

A yellow gravcar slid up beside the trio. Sal squinted in. "Driver—can you take us to the spaceport?"

"Sembi, it is within my capacity and control to do such. If you will produce the proper amount. . . ."

Sal flashed her credit card. The driver's yellow face went wide-eyed in surprise. *Sembi!*—your very presence is my reward!"

They climbed in. The car rose swiftly above tile and brick rooftops, arcing high over the squalid confusion of the city. The glare of three suns bounced in their eyes, making the spread-out city shimmer and melt below them. The streets fused with the houses, and the houses flowed together into a shining red pool, almost liquid, a fuming molten-rock sea whose boundaries were the jagged teeth of mountains that surrounded the valley city like dessicated mummy jaws. Reptiles glided in the shining air, their leather shapes fading into luminous blurs of light as Sal watched. She rubbed her eyes, but the illusion of isolation from reality

(Continued on page 127)

THE WORLDS OF MONTY WILLSON WILLIAM F. NOLAN

William Nolan—co-author of Logan's Run—offers a short and to the point story about a man who was able to right a wrong . . . and right a wrong . . . and . . .

IT looked like the same world, but it wasn't.

The date was all right: June, 1980. And Chicago looked like Chicago, but some things were wrong with it.

I was in a bar on Michigan, having a Bloody Mary, when I began to suspect I'd shifted over.

The bartender was talking about the lunar base we'd just put up and how it wouldn't be long before we'd be sending men to Mars. Ordinary talk. But then he said, "Too damn bad about Armstrong and Aldrin, dying that way on the moon. They should have made it."

Well, that wasn't right—because Apollo 11 *had* made it. A-OK all the way. Hell, I'd even talked to Armstrong in Florida six months after the mission. I'm in the space game, a small subcontractor for NASA. Among other things, I make the little bolts that go into the legs of the LM.

So now I'm surprised by what this man is saying. But I didn't argue with him. I'm not the emotional type; in space research raw emotion is a liability.

ity.

There are several small parks in Chicago. One of them was dedicated to the three moon boys early in 1970: Apollo Park. I took a cab over to look at the memorial.

In my world they have Armstrong, Aldrin and Collins sculptured in bronze above a plaque honoring Man's First Voyage to the Moon. In *this* world three other guys were up there.

I'd shifted over.

My mind isn't closed to anything. I had always been ready to accept the fact that parallel worlds exist in our universe, but I'd never personally experienced the shift from one to another.

I wanted to make certain, so I checked some things.

I found out that Robert Kennedy had become the next President after Johnson. Sirhan's bullet had missed. California *had* been hit by that quake everyone worried about in 1968. They'd lost L.A. And most of San Francisco. Vietnam had been wrapped up when Kennedy ordered a general

pullout in the spring of '69. Taylor had divorced Burton two years earlier and had run off with Omar Sharif. And more.

But you can see why I was convinced.

The spooky part came when I thought about myself.

The other me, the one in *this* world. Did I still live at the Shorehurst in River Forest? And was I still married?

Yes to both questions. The names were on the box: Mr. and Mrs. Montgomery K. Willson.

But what could I do about it? I couldn't just walk up and introduce myself to myself.

I needed a new name and a new face to live in this world, but that would take money. And I had just twenty dollars in my wallet. I'd have to forge some checks as Monty Willson. Take the risk.

I think, really, that it would have all worked out all right if I had not become curious about the moon disaster and looked up the account in the library. That's when the truth hit me: a leg on the LM had collapsed and *that* had been the actual cause of the crash. A bolt had sheared.

One of mine.

No, Montgomery K. Willson wasn't blamed. He gave a cool statement to the press, claiming that the angle of impact against the rocks had been se-

vere enough to shear any type of bolt, and NASA had supported his statement.

But I knew he was lying. No bolt of mine would shear under any conditions. Which meant, plainly and simply, that Monty Willson had bungled the job.

I was a murderer. I'd killed Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin.

At least this fact solved the problem of what I'd do and who I'd be in this world: I'd be myself.

But first, of course, I had to eliminate the other me.

Which wasn't at all difficult. I followed myself out of the apartment each night for two nights. Then, on the third evening, I used a knife in the dark and buried the body. I felt no guilt, knowing I had punished a man who would never have been punished otherwise. It was a debt I owed society.

Things progressed smoothly. I fell into the pattern of the new world without any trouble, and my wife didn't suspect a thing.

Now, as I write this, the only problem is that a man has been following me for the past couple of nights.

I know who he is, naturally.

Monty Willson.

And I'm sure he means to kill me.

—William F. Nolan

ON SALE NOW IN JUNE FANTASTIC

1. POUL ANDERSON'S MAJOR NEW NOVEL—

THE BYWORLDER

2. HANK STINE & LARRY NIVEN'S—NO EXIT

13. OVA HAMLET'S—WAR OF THE DOOM ZOMBIES

4. RICHARD PECK'S—THE MAN WHO FADED AWAY

5. ED BRYANT'S—THE LURKER IN THE LOCKED BEDROOM

6. L. SPRAGUE DE CAMP'S—LITERARY SWORDSMEN

& SORCERS

7. ALEXEI PANSHIN'S—S.F. IN DIMENSION

(New Perspective)

The Lost Language

By DAVID H. KELLER, M.D.

FAMOUS AMAZING CLASSIC

This is a pathetic story especially interesting from various viewpoints. An unknown tongue and an unknown script enter into it and Dr. Keller appears at his best in his kindly human nature and depiction of the best that is in us. It will remind our readers of the rare instances of what the Spaniards might call a life "Incomunicado," applied to a prisoner who is not allowed to see or communicate with anyone. An interesting feature of the story is that it is written by a man who is an expert in psychological phases of this strange human existence of ours.

Illustrated by MOREY

DAVID PHILLIPS, 3rd, was a beautiful child.

He was a baby any parents would be proud of.

His father, David Phillips, Jr., and his Grandfather, David Phillips were proud of him; also his mother and all his sisters. They bragged about his sturdy body and his bright eyes and his crop of black hair. They talked about the fortune of the family in finally having a male heir after three daughters. But when the boy reached the age of two they talked less and when he was four years old they ceased to talk.

There was nothing wrong with the boy's body.

But he would not talk.

That is the way they put it. He would not talk.

Even when he was four they would not admit that he could not,—because all of his relatives, even some of the physicians they consulted, were sure that he could talk *if he wanted to*.

He did not even vocalize.

As a baby he had cried. As he grew

older, he outgrew the infantile noises of displeasure. It almost seemed as though he was training himself to accept the vicissitudes of life from the standpoint of a—stoic, perhaps even of a philosopher.

There did not seem to be much mental deficiency. He learned to take care of himself, to adjust himself to his environment, to dress, feed, and amuse himself. He was really a bright, adorable, loving child. Accepting life as he found it, he lived in the home and with his family without in any way being a burden. At five years he was a little man, but he did not talk.

By this time the child's family was decidedly interested in the problem. Being a wealthy family it was able to secure the services of specialists in speech-training, who also became personally interested.

But just being interested did not help. Even when he became a national problem, even when learned men devoted some days of their vacations to a visit to the Phillips home, even when psycholo-



A day later sixty men from every part of the world assembled in a room with perfect acoustics.

gists and brain experts offered their services and advice *gratis*, there was no improvement.

Every effort was made to arouse his interest in language as a medium of communicating thought. He was studied, bribed, and even punished in the endeavor to make him utter a sound. He simply accepted any treatment with a certain degree of patience and kept on living his silent life.

He played with the playthings of children of his age. He worked, ate, slept, loved, had pets, took trips with the family, grew into sturdy seven year boyhood, in every way a nice, adaptable, lovable youngster, the pride of his family and their despair.

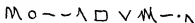
He was a silent boy.

At that he was never out of communication with the world. He learned what was expected of him, but he learned by imitation. Not that he was deaf; in fact, all the tests showed him to be peculiarly sensitive to sounds. When a snail crawled out of the aquarium at night and dropped to the carpeted floor he heard it fall and went to its rescue. He liked to hear the birds sing, the radio play, the family talk; there was no doubt he could hear noises unheard by the older members of the family, but words, just plain words, the sound of letters conjoined, left him cold and uninterested. Thus he grew up learning what people expected of him and making his wants known, but never through the medium of language.

FROM the age of two he had one outstanding habit, scribbling on paper with a pencil; later he used crayon, or pen and ink. At first it was just plain baby serawls, the kind of marks any child would make, given white paper and a pencil; marks like this,



but later on he developed a rather systematized series of marks which, while they varied from day to day, had a certain uniformity and a definite sequence, like this,



"That is writing!" a specialist exclaimed, who came a thousand miles to study the child. "That is writing and the child is trying to communicate with the world."

It was all well enough to say that it was writing; in fact everyone knew that it was writing. What else could it be called? But what kind of writing? And what did it mean? Even when they found out by the boy's actions that



meant he would like grapefruit for breakfast, how much better off was he, and his family and the world? The specialist continued:

"The child knows what he wants to express, and is expressing is in his own way. The marks he makes have no relation to any other known writing. An intensive study of these marks would ultimately bring him into communication with a selected few. He happens to belong to a wealthy family who could hire a few educated persons to learn some of the signs. If he was a child of a poor family he would end in a school for the feeble-minded. The state would not, could not afford to bother with him."

"BUT he is not a case of mental deficiency," protested the mother.

"That is purely an academic question,"

argued the specialist. "For centuries the human race has communicated with each other, first by sounds, and later by writing. Writing is simply a mode of sound. I admit that people learn to read silently, but even then they transpose the typed symbols into sounds subconsciously and thus obtain the meaning of the printed line and page. The dot and dash of the Morse code simply replaces letters which, in proper combination, have definite sounds, and those sounds for centuries have had definite meaning. This boy forms his own symbols. There is no doubt they mean definite things to him. You have shown me that, and my experiments with him have convinced me that you are right. But his refusal to adopt the symbols of the herd, to learn the alphabet, to follow the lines of communication used by his ancestors and his associates, stamps him at once as abnormal."

"But not feeble-minded!" cried the father. "I have visited the schools where imbeciles are cared for. I have talked with the physicians who care for them. I have placed my son in every possible relation with them, made every possible comparison. I am not a neuro-psychiatrist, don't pretend to be a psychologist, but if my son is mentally deficient then I am a white elephant."

The scientist smiled the smile of despair as he replied,

"Have it your own way. After all he is your son. You have a right to have a familial pride. I admit that he is a nice boy, but that is all he will be, all he ever will be, just a nice boy, just a healthy animal. He will grow to be a man and when he does, he will be just what he is to-day, only larger. The herd will not like him, they will shun him as they do everyone who does not conform to the pattern, who does not run in the common groove of life. He is an abnormal and

he will stay an abnormal, unless he learns to adopt the means of communication used by the rest of the human race. A deaf-mute can be taught to write, he can even be taught to talk, but this boy is a psychic rebel. He refuses to learn."

"Perhaps he cannot learn. Is that refusing?" asked an interested sister, a college graduate, who had majored in psychology, speech and habit training, because she loved her little brother and wanted to be of service to him.

"You are right and I was wrong," admitted the psychologist, "but after all I . . . wrong merely in the words used and not in the idea. The child is so bright in every other way that he creates the impression of wilful resistance. Let me explain. I was working with him yesterday. Take his symbol for an egg, you know what it is, but let me draw it as he does,

AO-|.

By that he means an egg. Now I write it the way we do in English,

EGG

I show it to him. I hand him an egg. I show him his symbol. In every way that I can I try to explain to him that his symbol and my symbol and the actual egg are all the same. Then I take away his symbol, and give him another piece of paper and show him that I want him to copy my symbol for an egg. He simply shakes his head and draws his symbol. Now I know any number of children three years old who would copy my symbol and understand that it meant an egg, but he refuses to do it. He thinks that I am wrong. That shows his rebel mind. He refuses to accept instruction. He thinks his symbol, for an egg, is right

and mine is wrong. You cannot teach a child like him. He wants us to learn his language, while refusing to learn ours. From a purely academic viewpoint it is possible to do so, but here is the difficulty. His language is not a sound language. It never can be spoken."

"Certainly it can!" exclaimed the sister. "He makes a sign for an egg. I understand the sign. I translate it into sound, and say the word 'EGG.' What do you mean by saying that it cannot be spoken?"

The man shook his head.

"I INSIST that there can be no language without sound."

"How about the finger talk of the deaf mutes?" asked the father.

"What is it? They form signs with their fingers and those signs are words or letters, and the letters make words and the words are the words everybody uses and knows the signs and sounds of. Even the Maya symbols are meaningless till we translate them into words, and then we have to speak the words. If your son would only learn the finger language of the deaf-mute, it would at once change the entire picture. What I am trying to say is that he refuses to accept the modes of communication used by any group of the human race. To that extent he has a rebel mind."

"I have been close to the lad," the father retorted. "I have been with him a lot recently. We have gone fishing together, and camping out and all that sort of thing. He may have a rebel mind, though it is my opinion that he is the way he is, because he cannot help it. But there is one thing I do believe. He is perfectly satisfied with his written language and it means something to him. He is very much pleased when the family uses it. Somehow it makes him feel we

are interested in him and love him. His writing means a lot to him and he is proud of it. I think that at times he is sad because we are not intelligent enough to understand it."

"You find someone to translate it into sound and then I will accept it as a bona-fide language, and that is my last word," said the scientist, and with that he left.

The father, the following year, took David Phillips, 3rd, to London. There was a man there, Henry Jordon, who had gained international renown by his work with vibrations. He was the inventor of the vibrowriter, the new typewriter that could be talked to, and which transposed the spoken sound into typed words, a contrivance which made perfect spelling possible, provided the words were perfectly pronounced. The father had an idea and was willing to travel four thousand miles and spend any amount of money to find out whether he was right or wrong. His letters of introduction opened the door to the scientist's workshop; his story opened the door to the man's heart; the adorable healthy boy at once won the inventor's interest and love.

"I may be asking the impossible," explained David Phillips, Jr., "but the boy is my son, and perhaps the impossible can be made possible. You have a machine that can turn sound into a written language. Can you make a machine that can do the reverse? Can you make some kind of apparatus we could run this lad's writing through and change it into sound?"

"What kind of sound?"

"Any kind. Take this symbol for egg to start with."

"But you know what the sound is for that. It is E G, *EGG*, just *egg*. You do not need a machine to do that."

"Yes, but that is our sound, the English sound. His sound may be entirely different."

"How can it be. You have just told me that he never talks, never even vocalizes."

"That is true, but the experts in America tell me that there can be no language without a foundation of sound, so there must be some corresponding sounds to his symbols even if he does not make them. But here are his papers. You may not believe it, but on the way over from New York, he was writing all the time, having the best kind of a time, and I think he was writing a story. At least he was happy doing it. And here is something else. He wants a typewriter."

"Why not buy him one?"

"I would but he does not want our kind. He keeps on showing me his writing, and then points to my portable machine."

"In other words you mean that he is telling you he wants a machine of his own, with his own symbols?"

"That must be it."

"I will make it for him." declared Henry Jordon. "You leave his papers here. I will have them analysed and broken up into units and have a typewriter made that he can write with, just as well as he can write with a pen or pencil. You take him to see the Tower of London and Trafalgar Square, and come back in three days and I will have a present for him."

On the third day father and son returned to the work-shop of Henry Jordon. The inventor took them into a room that had only a chair and a table but on the table was a typewriter, and in it was a sheet of white paper. Jordon touched five keys, took the paper out and showed it to the boy. He had written the symbols for egg,

70-1.

at the machine, and then he took the paper and showed that he wanted it put back in the machine. Then he looked at the keyboard, and slowly, painfully slowly, he started to write his symbols for eggs. Then he started to cry, great tears of happiness, and he kissed his father, and went and hugged the inventor, and all the rest of that day he wrote on the machine while the two men watched him and compared the writing with his papers and experimented, handing him simple objects, and urging him to write their names on the machine.

That night, in the hotel, he would not go to sleep till the machine was securely placed on the bed where he could hold it while he slept.

"All you have to do now," said the Father, "is to take his typed manuscripts and translate them into sound."

"That is all," replied Jordon, "but that may not be as easy as you think. Come back in a week."

That night the father could not sleep. He sat most of the night by the boy's bed, looking at him, the pride and hope, the last hope of the family. The boy slept peacefully, but in his sleep he never lost contact with the typewriter. Early in the morning the father arrived at a decision. He sent a radigram to his daughter, the one who had majored in psychology, speech and habit training, because she loved her little brother. He said,

Anna Phillips;

57 Park Place;

New York City, N. Y.

Come to London on next boat.

We need you.

Father.

Because of this there were three of the family who called on Henry Jordon at the expiration of a week. They found the inventor, tired and hollow eyed but happy.

David Phillips, 3rd, looked at it. Then

"I have done it," he said simply, "and you do not owe me a cent. I can use the same principle with any type. In a month's time, tired people will be placing pages of a book in their machine and hear it read to them. Suppose we try it. Have the lad write something on his machine."

BY signs they explained to David Phillips, 3d, what they wanted. He wrote three lines double spaced. Then the inventor took the paper, placed it in another machine, and pressed a button. Sounds came from the machine, sounds that seemed to be speech, but that were unintelligible to the audience. But the boy was spellbound. He looked from his father to his sister and then to Jordon and by signs asked that it all be done over again. Jordon wrote his signs for the word egg and showed it to him. Then he put it in the second machine and pressed the button, a single sound was heard.

"And that," commented Jordon, "is the sound that means 'egg' to him. It is the sound that corresponds to his symbol. Suppose we learn to make that sound. I will get twenty different objects and place them on the table. Then his sister can make that sound and we will see what he does."

Again and again they had the machine sound the word for egg, till the sister learned to say it. Then a watch, keys, matches, money, pins and an egg were placed on the table. The sister took the lad over and made the sound, just once, pointing to the table. The lad listened and without hesitation picked up the egg and handed it to his sister.

"That tells the story," commented the father. "My boy can hear. We always knew that. He can hear but cannot talk, but he can write. What he writes can

be transposed into sound and when that sound is reproduced he can understand it, and the rest is just training."

"It is a track," frowned Jordon, "on which the trains only run one way."

"At least it is a track," insisted the father. "Suppose you put a whole page of his type in and see how it sounds."

"It is gibberish to me," commented the inventor.

"That is because you are not a linguist," retorted the sister sharply. "Perhaps some one else could understand it."

"Let us put it to the test," said the inventor, smiling. At this very time there is a meeting in London of scientists from all over the world. Perhaps fifty different languages are represented. We will go there and have them listen to it. Someone there may recognize some of the sounds."

A day later sixty men from every part of the world assembled in a room with perfect acoustics. The problem was explained to them. A hundred questions were asked and answered, so they would have a clear understanding of the situation. Then an entire page of the lad's typing was run through the sound-transposing machine, purposely slowed so that the sounds could be differentiated.

And then silence, followed by a mixture of speech, but no one seemed to be sure. One by one the lingual experts rose and, saying that they could not understand it, left the room. At last only one man was left. He came up to the disappointed experimenters.

"I am not sure of what I am going to say, but it may help," he began, in a rather apologetic tone. "I am from Wales, and I know a few of the Welsh dialects but not all. I believe that these words are Welsh, but is is not any dialect I am familiar with. But there was a little corner of Wales where they had an

odd language years ago, something different from the other dialects. I went there five years ago to investigate it and there was just one old woman there, Granny Lanarch, they called her, who could talk it, but no one could understand her. She talked it for me, and as I remember it, it sounded a little like this language you have had us listen to. So the best I can say is that it may be an old Welsh dialect and Granny Lanarch can talk it. I will give you her address. She talks fairly good English in addition to her dialect, so you could have her listen to it and even make some phonographic records of her old speech."

"We will go there," said David Phillips.

"But it cannot be Welsh," commented the inventor. "You are from New York."

"MY family came from that town in 1765," announced the New Yorker, "so we certainly were Welsh at that time."

"And it may be a case of inherited memory," added the daughter. "At least the psychologists think that there may be such a thing."

They went to Wales and at last they came to the little town by the Irish Sea, where Granny Lanarch had lived. Had lived, for she had been dead these two years. They went into her little cottage, they sat on her old chairs, they looked out on the waves through windows she

had looked out of, but Granny Lanarch was dead.

The inventor beat a restless tattoo on the table with his fingers, not knowing what to say or how to say it. The father sat unstrung and nerve-broken. The boy, interested in new sights, smiled happily. The sister, sat with white face and closed eyes. At last the father shook himself, as though waking from a dream.

"We have come to the end of the trail," he whispered. "My son knows something, but it is a lost language. He will have to live his life alone."

The sister opened her eyes, opened her arms and pulled her brother to her lap. She turned fiercely to her father.

"What do you mean?" she demanded. "What do you mean by saying that he will be alone? He can write what he thinks, and when I put it in the machine I can hear it and learn to understand it; and if I can understand it I can learn to talk it, and when I talk it, he can hear me and answer me on his typewriter. What do you mean by saying that he will be alone when he has me?"

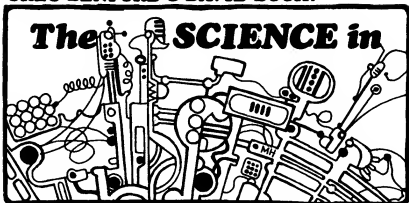
"You cannot do that," whispered her father gently, almost with a caress in his tone. "You cannot do that, Anna. It would mean a life of sacrifice, a life of solitary devotion. You could not do anything else. Why should you sacrifice everything for him?"

She simply held her brother the tighter, as she replied:

"Because I love him."

THE END.

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The SCIENCE in

SCIENCE FICTION *

HOW TO BUILD A SOLAR SYSTEM

With this column, David Book takes a short vacation, and Greg Benford solos, as he describes the scientific extrapolation which went into his own novel, Deeper Than the Darkness. For another look at this novel, see The Future in Books, next issue.—Ted White

It isn't easy, you know, being God-like.

That's what sf authors are, at least part of the time. Like every other writer, they manufacture characters and places and incidents, births and deaths, rage and lust—all by putting words on a page. Sf writers must go even further, though, because frequently they must conjure up whole new worlds, new stars, complete new sectors of a galaxy for the necessities of their plots.

The dramatic problems of making characters and scenes convincing are as old as literature, and I have absolutely nothing new to say about them; ask Aristotle. But solar systems—ah, that's something else. Only in sf does one get a good chance at some "wild-eyed speculation" (as a friend—well, acquaintance—of mine calls it) that will actually see print. (Scientists always speculate,

but they usually get a queasy feeling when they do it, because after all, what would people think if they published such stuff in the *PHYSICAL REVIEW*? This is one of the reasons the *PHYSICAL REVIEW* is kept pure and clean and dull.)

Some time ago Ted White asked me to explore thoroughly a single book by a single author, ferreting out all the hidden tricks and errors in the background science. "Every one of us rigs things to go the right way," Ted said. "Just expose us."

I am normally a shy and retiring person. It would grieve me to have to point out where, say, Hal Clement slipped a decimal point. It would grieve me especially if I turned out to be wrong. So I thought about Ted's suggestion and I decided the only thing to do was attack one of my own books. At least then the author can't complain of unfair treatment; then too, I don't have to do much background reading.

The only trouble with this idea is that people will think I am vain, always talking about my novels. I suppose I will just have to live with this.

In any case, the list of candidate authors is pretty slim. Sf doesn't have droves of writers who know a spaceship from a supernova—or sometimes, even a hawk from a handsaw. There are many ways to explain this—low quality of instruction in science, artistic temperament not mixing with scientific detachment, etc.—and I think it's rather a pity. As Poul Anderson has said, one justification for the existence of science fiction—perhaps the main one—is that it can suggest to us the size, variety and sheer wonder of the universe. But how can any writer possibly show such immense, profound beauty if he doesn't know much *about* that universe?

I think sf writers—and readers—are daunted by the wealth of scientific information around them. Twentieth century science is rich in detail and complexity, though the underlying principles are really quite simple and they can be understood by any intelligent person who cares to. The sf reader who wants a solid non-specialist grounding without drowning in a flood of facts could do no better than to buy and read Shklovskii and Sagan's *Intelligent Life in the Universe* (Delta, \$2.95). It's tailor-made for the sense of wonder, and full of delicious detail.

Still, books of high quality are few. The worst aspect of most popular science is that seldom do you get to see science *used*. One of the attractions of sf has for me is the chance to watch the author do something creative with the common fund of scientific knowledge. Heinlein, Clement, Clarke, Anderson, Niven, Vinge—the list is shopworn precisely because a new name is added only about once every five years. It's a pity there aren't more, because the game these fellows play is as well-defined and as beautiful as a championship tennis match.

Take, for instance, stars. How often does a story open

It was an ordinary star, yellow-white, with five inner planets. One showed signs of life. Within a page, to be sure, the protagonist

will be making introductions with five-limbed intelligent rodents who speak in a stilted, computer-like prose, and the solar system they inhabit will be pure papier-maché. The author doesn't care; he is off whoring after some terribly important sociological point.

Things shouldn't be as simple as all that. There is danger of intruding too much science into a story—I overdo it myself, I think—but the alternative of no hard background at all is probably worse.

Anyway, it isn't that hard to do it right. And once a writer understands something of how his particular solar system works, new plot implications and ideas immediately suggest themselves.

Suppose we start from scratch and construct a solar system (next issue we'll do planets; they're harder).

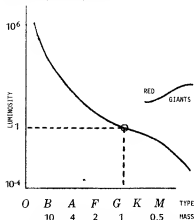
The basic index for stars is their mass. If I start out with a had guess about my star's mass, nothing I can do will make an informed reader believe that an inhabited planet could orbit it. Well okay, you say, who cares if the planets are inhabited?

I do. Very few sf stories take place on Jovian-type planets, or on rocky asteroids circling some distant star. The device of habitable turf that is still strange and alien is fundamental to most sf, so I'll talk mostly about that circumstance. People interested in other sorts of planets can stay after class.

Stars come in all sizes and colors, but most of them have masses less than our sun. Red giants are very rare. This reflects a general tendency in all astronomical bodies: many small ones, few large ones. Even in our solar system, there are many, many asteroids and only nine planets. Generally, the smaller a star, the less light it emits and the cooler it is.

There is a way of summarizing the many thousands of stellar observations made by astronomers, called the Hertzsprung-Russell diagram. A crude one is shown below. The left hand side gives luminosity—how much

light the star puts out—and the lower axis gives the mass. The two dotted lines represent our Sol. Along the lower axis are the letters of spectral types. O stars, for instance, are very hot blue giants. Sol is a G2, which means roughly that it lies a little to the right of the “standard” G-type star on our chart. Almost all interesting stars—for purposes of finding a habitable world—are bunched around the middle region in both luminosity and mass; that is, near Sol.



One absolutely rigid requirement of the star I'm looking for is that it lie on the line shown in the chart. This is the “main sequence,” which just means that most stars fit somewhere on this line, *not* that they all must move along it during their lifetimes. (For instance, Sol probably is going to move directly to the right, into the red giant phase, in 3 billion years.) Usually—we think—a star becomes a member of the main sequence just after birth, and burns away nearly all its energy before it budges up or down or sideways on the sequence. Therefore, in order for my star to remain stable and warm its planets in a regular manner, I require that it be on the main sequence.

There's more to it than that, of course. I could put my finger down on some part of the diagram—say, pick an A-type star—but

then I would have to live with the fact that such a star has about four times Sol's mass. One consequence of such mass is to make its lifetime on the main sequence less than three billion years. If I want the planet that circles the star to evolve life, I must give it at least a few billion years to cool down, make an atmosphere and provide seas. It turns out that—according to current theory—stars with masses greater than 1.4 solar masses spend less than three billion years on the main sequence. So I reject them.

That leaves me with stars somewhere to the right of the F5's or so, (the F5's are about halfway between the F and G marks on our chart.) This is about as much detail as most sf authors ever use.

A few take the next step, but it's a tricky one. Obviously, if a planet is too close to its star it will be fried, and if it's too far away the very atmosphere will turn into frost during the winter. These are undesirable pieces of real estate. In our solar system, the boundaries of the region in which this *doesn't* happen are roughly given by Venus's orbit on the inside, and that of Mars on the outside. The surface of Venus is certainly uninhabited, since summers there run about 700 degrees. The Martian atmosphere is mostly carbon dioxide and current evidence indicates that the poles of that planet are covered with CO₂ ice which condenses out from the atmosphere. Is Mars just a bit too far from the sun to allow life to arise spontaneously? We still don't know, but clearly Mars is about as cold as we can let a habitable planet become, if we want to sell off lots for the vacation season.

The region between Mars and Venus is our “ecosphere.” Every star has one. To be sure, very small stars may have ecospheres only a few miles in width, but still there will exist some volume in which the temperatures are mild enough. By this time you may be asking, why bother about that? Every star has an ecosphere, so every star can, in theory, have habitable planets. Right?

Not quite. A star exerts tides on its planets, whether the tides are in the sea, the atmosphere, or in the planet's crust itself. If the tides are very strong, the planet will gradually lose its "spin" and stop rotating about its own axis. This is nearly what has happened to Mercury; it rotates every 58.7 days. (The fact that it rotates at all is due to its elliptical orbit.) Venus is even slower: 116.8 days and retrograde to boot. By contrast, Earth rotates in 24 hours, because it is further away from the sun.

Nobody wants to live on a planet that has such long days; the oceans would hoil away. To reduce the effect of tides, I must move my planets away from the star.

But now I have to satisfy two conditions: inside the ecosphere, but outside the tide-locking region. This is a pretty strong constraint for a star. Tides are governed by the star's mass. Luminosity (and thus the boundaries of the ecosphere) is given by the mass, too, as the Hertzsprung-Russell diagram shows. Putting it all together, it works out that habitable planets can only exist around stars having greater than 0.72 Sol masses. Even then, not all of the ecosphere will have habitable planets in it, because the inner ones will still be tide-locked. To have a completely free ecosphere, the star's mass must exceed 0.88 Sol masses.

There are some quibbles about this, though. I've taken tides produced in the planet's crust, which are relatively weak. Thus the mass limit might be a little higher than 0.88. Also, I've been talking about solitary planets. If our habitable "planet" is really a *moon*, all bets are off.

Moons become tide-locked, so they always present one face to their primary. (A "primary" is just the planet they're orbiting.) Then if the moon circles its planet quickly, it will rotate with respect to the planet's star. Right here in our solar system, our moon circles Earth every 27 days, so it has a 27-day-long Lunar "day." Even if our moon were big enough to be habitable, such a long

day would rule out life forms as we know them. But Almalthea, Jupiter's innermost satellite, circles Jupiter in only 12 hours. Io, the next moon out, has a "day" of 1.72 Earth days. If Jupiter were closer to the sun and Io larger than it is, life might arise there.

If we want to allow for such situations, we can lower the star's mass to 0.35 Sol masses. Personally, I don't think it's worth the while, because moons the size of Earth (or even Mars) seem pretty unlikely. We have 31 moons in our solar system, and the largest (Ganymede) has only 2.6% Earth's mass. Maybe nature likes small moons.

So much for quibbles. The *real* question about our star is whether it has a companion. Most stars do, you know—about half those in our galaxy seem to be in binary systems. For a long while astronomers thought binary stars couldn't have habitable planets, because the stars would perturb a planet's orbit. This is sometimes true, but it works out that in many cases the two stars are too far apart.

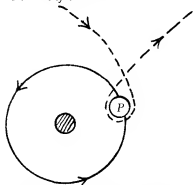
Sfwriters are always using Alpha Centauri as a locale, but few of them show signs of knowing that our nearest neighbor is not a single star, but in fact a *triple* system. Of course, the third star, Proxima Centauri, is small and flares up frequently, so it can't have habitable planets near it. But both Alpha and Beta Centauri are ordinary stars, of G4 and K1 type, respectively. Their ecospheres are about one Astronomical Unit in radius (one A.U. is the distance of the Earth from Sol) and they orbit about each other on ellipses, never coming closer than 11.2 A.U.

Our own solar system would be much like the Centauri system if we had another, somewhat smaller sun a bit further out than Saturn. Such a new sun would subject the outer region of our ecosphere to large gravitational perturbations, but Earth would still probably be stable in its orbit, and it would not overheat. I expect the same is true for the ecospheres of Alpha and Beta Centauri, so we may find inhabitable planets there.

Several years ago I was mulling over these facts and speculating about binary stars. I happened to run across an article by Freeman Dyson in *SCIENCE*, about gravitational machines. And then I had an idea.

Everybody knows that bouncing a ball off a fixed wall doesn't speed it up any. But now make the "wall" move—say, make it a car coming toward you. A perfectly elastic ball bounced off the front of the car will come back with the car's velocity added on.

The same principle works even if I turn the car into a planet. I've illustrated this in the sketch below. The shaded object in the middle is a star, and revolving about it is the planet P. If I fly a rocket (dashed line) by P, slipping into its gravitational field and allowing my ship to be carried along briefly by the planet, I can slip back out of P's grasp before one complete orbit around P is completed. And my rocket will emerge with an additional velocity of $2V$, where V is P's velocity of rotation about its star.



This is the same technique that NASA's planetary probes are going to use to reach the outer planets. The first Grand Tour probe will approach Jupiter, "rebound" off its gravitational field, and fly on to Uranus, Pluto and beyond on the free velocity of $2V$ it has picked up.

Well, I thought, why not apply this to a situation where some truly big velocities can be reached? For ordinary planets, $2V$ is

about 40 miles/second. How high could I go?

To get more free velocity, I had to find a stable astronomical system that would have one part revolving rapidly around another. This means some odd type of binary. Generally, the closer together two stars are, the faster they orbit about each other. How to get stars close together? Pick small stars to begin with. The most condensed stars we can see are white dwarfs.

That wasn't good enough for me. I wanted the ultimate. The smallest, most compacted stars theory allows are neutron stars. Inside one, all the mass of an ordinary star is squeezed into a radius of about ten miles.

But a neutron star doesn't radiate appreciably. So my binary system to support life, had to be one ordinary star, plus a neutron star. This led to problems, though: a neutron star forms after a nova, and what would the nova have done to the planets around the binary?

Okay, make the neutron star—Jagen, I called it—very old. Older than the planetary system itself. In fact, why not have it captured by the other star, Lekki, at the time of formation of the planetary system? Capture is possible between two stars if there is enough dust and assorted matter around to absorb the momentum of the incoming star.

Fine. But something else occurred to me. Jagen was orbiting so quickly— V was about a thousandth of the speed of light—it would radiate gravitational waves. Not much of an energy loss, to be sure, but if it had been doing that for three billion years . . .

I checked it out, and found that because of that radiation, Jagen must have been moving inward toward the ordinary star, Lekki, throughout its history. If I extrapolated Jagen's orbit back far enough, I found that it rendered nearby planets orbitally unstable early in the life of the solar system.

But. The very outermost edge of the ecosphere remained stable throughout the sys-

tem's history. There I decided—well, let's be frank; I was forced—to put Veden, the sole inhabitable planet in the system. A Jovian type planet lay further out, but I never needed it in my story.

By this time I had a story to go with it, too.

Deeper Than the Darkness was my first novel; it was based on a novelette of the same name which was nominated for both the Nebula and Hugo awards of 1970. Looking back, I think the book has some good points, but now I can see flaws that my fingers itch to correct. When I started the book my ambition was to write the absolute topper of a space opera plot. I wanted to put good characterization, background, mysticism, science and suspense into a plot that reeked of 1936—alien invasion, space fleets, exploding stars, the whole power-mad-galactic-fantasy trip. Well, some of it worked, some didn't. I wish now that I had not stuck with the space opera finish I originally laid out, and when the book comes up for reprinting in 5 years I'm going to rewrite it completely. For the meanwhile, though, it stands.

As things turned out, I made Lekki 1.3 Sol masses and Jagen, the neutron star, 0.8. This kept Veden, my planet, fairly warm, and made Jagen zip around the larger Lekki very quickly. Why you ask? Why bother with Jagen? The answer is *economics*.

I postulated a future empire in which faster-than-light travel was achievable (my only concession to what I regard as patent impossibility) but very, very expensive. Such craft I called Jump ships. The younger colonies couldn't afford Jump ships and were left with ramscoops, the sublight craft that run on the hydrogen between the stars. Ramscoops have one peculiar property: they must reach a minimum speed of about 100 miles per second to even begin operating. Once that speed is reached, they accelerate very slowly until they reach about a thousandth of light speed. Only above that speed

do they become really efficient. How to get that initial thousandth of light? From bounding off Jagen's gravitational field, of course; I called it the Flinger:

The scoop ships, gulping down interstellar hydrogen with gigantic magnetic fields and spewing it out the end for propulsion, were the long-term backbone of the Empire, little publicized.

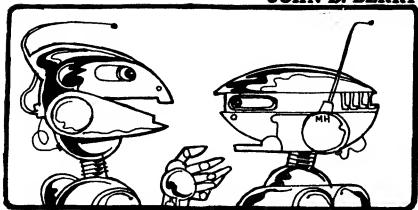
A planet that sent out, say, a rare alloy native only to their system, couldn't program the ramscoop ship for a definite destination, because by the time the ship spanned a hundred light years its target might have changed economic structure entirely. The time lag was too great.

So the volume of space around Lekki-Jagen served as a storage area, a cosmic clearing house for this region of the Empire. Moving large masses through Jump space was beyond the resources of a new colony planet. But ram scoops were cheap and easy to build. When the colony got a product it thought might sell—and so bring in currency and bartered goods in return—it packed a shipment into a ramscoop and programmed the onboard computer for Lekki-Jagen. When it arrived a half century later it was cataloged and directed into a waiting orbit.

There it sat. If no other colony bid for it the ramscoop orbited silently forever, costing its owners periodic docking fees to pay for Fleet Control. Usually it sold rather soon. Then it was reprogrammed for the buyer's system, dropped through the Flinger and shot out into deep space at a respectable velocity. The Flinger could cut fifty percent off the transit time of a fifty light year journey, because without it the scoops required long weary years to pick up their initial velocity.

So now we've gone from dreaming up natural objects, like solar systems, to designing huge machines that future stellar empires could use to keep the groceries moving along. Maybe there's a moral in this, some-

(Continued on page 127)



*** THE CLUBHOUSE**

Dick Geis, in an editorial reply to a letter in **SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW** commenting on my review of **SFR** in these pages a few months ago:

"The aspect of John Berry's review of **SFR** that struck me as strange was its high emotional content; it was as if he felt outraged that **SFR** was no longer **PSYCHOTIC**. The unrequited love syndrome? He complained: 'Ten pages of book reviews? Are you kidding? I haven't read any of them, nor do I intend to.' So, out of hand, he refuses to read them, prejudging violently. Yet some book reviews can be as interesting and informative as any other form of writing. He could have as easily condemned novels, short stories, articles . . . And, of course, he violated the prime rule of the reviewer . . . to judge an effort on obvious intent and function. Ten pages of book reviews in a magazine dedicated to sf and titled **SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW** seems appropriate, but John wants the magazine to be something else and in the heat of his emotion, objectivity

lost out."

To Geis's opinions on book reviewing, I would like to juxtapose Terry Carr's comments from the most recent issue of **WARHOON**:

"Today it's seldom that I can read reviews for either entertainment or insight. Book and magazine reviewing has become the refuge of a mindless fandom, just comments on one story after another, a reflexive spewing out of emotional reactions in the form of sentences, with seldom any connections, extrapolations or conclusions. I read the reviews of a book to get the consensus of reactions to it, but to get any insight into the book I usually have to read it myself."

To that I can only add that I have read quite a few of **SFR**'s book reviews in the past, and I was not impressed. The more important question, though, is Geis's accusation that I violated "the prime rule of the reviewer." To this I have to plead at least partially guilty. That *was* an emotional review, less calm and less objective than most of the reviews

appearing in this column. But then, my criteria for reviewing and Geis's seem to differ. The principle on which I operate is that it is my job to articulate my own reaction to a fanzine so that the reader can see exactly why I reacted the way I did, and in so doing I hope to communicate some insight into the nature of the fanzine. My reactions seem to have some validity to the readers, or else all the comments on this column would be unfavorable. In the case of **SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW**, the review was obviously meant to give one of fandom's sacred cows a good kick in the butt; a great part of fandom still regards SFR as the leading fanzine and votes it Hugos, but quite a number of respected fans find it unreadable these days, and it was an expression of this feeling that I put into print.

Another of my most precious tenets as a reviewer is that I should attempt to shed light on what I'm reviewing from as many sides as possible, including those which I reject myself. That's why I'm reprinting Geis's comments. For the same reason, and for the sake of not imposing my own peculiar tastes on **AMAZING's** readers, I must recommend **SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW** after all. It is still an important fanzine, and despite my feeling that it has slipped badly in quality and that its concentration on controversy without enlightenment has hurt fandom, I would have to say that a newcomer to the field should read SFR.

FOCAL POINT #12.5, Sept., 1970; \$1 or, after the issue is sold down to 50 copies, \$1.50 each; special issue, from Arnie Katz, 59 Livingston St., Apt. 6-B, Brooklyn, NY 11201, and Rich Brown, 410-61st St., Apt. D-4, Brooklyn, NY 11220; 52 pp., mimeographed.

One of the moving forces in fandom

right now is the enthusiasm and support given to the Bob Shaw Fund, a special fund being raised to bring the renowned and brilliant Northern Irish fan Bob Shaw to the World SF Convention in Boston next Labor Day. The Fund is a unifying factor, a remarkable spur to an already-developing resurgence of quality writing and "fannishness" in fandom. ("Fannishness" is a loose term describing the attitude toward fandom that fans and their activities are interesting in their own right, not just as parasites of professional science fiction; fannish fanzines tend to put a high premium on humor and wit, and incidentally they often publish the best writing in fandom.) The most tangible evidence of this is the special issues of fanzines published to raise money for the Fund. Several faneditors either have published or are planning to publish special issues, generally large and filled with the best material they can get; these issues sell on a cash-only basis, with all proceeds being donated to the Fund. **FOCAL POINT** itself, which launched the Fund, has published the best Bob Shaw issue so far.

The material is divided between reprints from fanzines unavailable to most of today's fans and new material written especially for this issue. The reprints are classic: "The Fansmanship Lectures," written in the early Fifties by Bob Shaw as a satire on S. Potter's "Lifeshmanship" and on fandom's ploys and power games, is a marvelously funny set of "lectures". "Spokesman for Boskone," reprinted from Redd Boggs's small-circulation fanzine for FAPA, presents a rather unique view of John W. Campbell and **ANALOG** and is probably the weakest piece in the issue because it is paranoid rather than funny or perceptive. Arnie Katz's "The Fans From Yesterday" is a nice example of the genre of amateur

fiction by and about fans, in this case an extended and amusing story involving an extrapolated fancub in a New York fandom of the future. "Big Name Fan," also fannish fiction but considerably more divorced from reality, is one of the longer pieces written by one of fandom's three or four most brilliant humorists, Charles Burbee, in the late Forties; it is a devastating satire on those fans who get so carried away that they subordinate all the rest of the world to fandom in their minds' eyes, and it is, like all Burbee pieces, a joy to behold simply for the subtle humor of Burbee's style. The final reprint is "No Moving Parts," a humorous article written in pseudo-Burbree style by G. Gordon Dewey, a contemporary of Burbee's.

The new material ranges from adequate to excellent. The editorial columns by both Rich Brown and Arnie Katz are chatty, interesting to read, and occasionally funny, but they are not examples of brilliant writing. Calvin Demmon's "Big Bear Journal" is. Demmon is one of those very rare people whose sense of humor is unique and constantly entertaining; even in his serious writing you will find little twists of the absurd in his sentences. "Big Bear Journal" purports to be the diary of his eight days at Big Bear, California, where he was experimenting to test the validity of his friend's insistence that the country is infinitely preferable to the hubbub and hurly-burly of the Big City. Calvin's style holds a deceptive simplicity, and he employs it to excellent effect in such things as "The Bomb Disposal Squad, Big Bear, Calif. 1970" and "What They're Reading in the Mountains: A Survey." The other original material in FOCAL POINT ranges between these. Colleen Brown's account of her adventures in the

hospital, titled "Wake Up and Take Your Sleeping Pill," is amusing and slightly incredible when you realize that she swears that all but the final paragraph is strictly true (including the improbable title line). Steve Stiles contributes another installment of his ever-fascinating report on the trip he took to the British National Convention in spring of 1969 as that year's winner of the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund (TAFF); Steve's trip report suffers only from the long intervals between installments. "How I First Met Bob Shaw, Ate Pizza, and Found Ghod," by Ted White, is mostly a reminiscence piece by fandom's best writer of nostalgia, capped by the fact that it is written in Ted's best humorous style.

That is an impressive line-up of material. Its twin peaks are the pieces by Burbee and Demmon, who are perhaps the two most original humorists ever to pass through fandom. Calvin is writing actively again; I wish the same could be said of Burbee.

This special issue is given a fannish air by the top-notch cartooning of Jay Kinney, Bill Rotsler, Joe Staton (a marvelous caricaturist who seems to be doing his best work for FOCAL POINT), Steve Stiles, and Arthur Thomson (ATom). Information on regular issues of FOCAL POINT is in the fanzine listings at the end of this column. *Highly Recommended.*

WARHOON #27, Sept., 1970; 60¢, no subscriptions; irregular, from Richard Bergeron, 11 East 68th St., New York, NY 10021; 56 pp., mimeographed.

The most erudite fanzine of recent years, a repository for sheer talent and writing excellence unmatched by the best of its competitors, is back after an absence of over a year and a half. The last

time I reviewed WARHOON, when #26 came out in early 1969, I mentioned that Bergeron seemed intent on leading the fanzine away from its previous concern with discussion of science fiction (and its even earlier orientation toward political discussion) and into a more light-hearted, fannish mold. Despite the many intervening months, this process continues unabated, and the content of this issue is almost entirely fannish. The only material relating directly to science fiction is in the lettercolumn, where the readers are replying to the discussions of earlier issues. There is one section of Bergeron's editorial in which he quotes extensively from a pamphlet, entitled "Freeze—Wait—Reanimate!", from a group espousing the cause of cryogenically freezing people immediately upon their death. (He closed this section with the line, "Interested readers can obtain the 1967 address of the Life Extension Society from myself and in the meantime should stay close to their refrigerators.") This is the last item not directly concerned with fandom in the issue.

Bergeron's editorial embodies what is perhaps the explanation for his statements several years ago that he hated actually meeting fans face-to-face, because, even though he may enjoy talking to them at the time, he is left with a set of ruined subjects for his fan writing—once he has talked about something with a fan, he can't write about it. The reason may be that, entertaining and skillful as his writing is, much of what he writes on fannish topics is lengthy expansions of the obvious. For instance, in this issue he spends a page analyzing the significance of the British practice (found in Pete Weston's SPECULATION all the time) of adding

"(Cont/d)" at the bottom of each right-hand page of a fanzine if the article continues onto the next page. Later on, Bergeron writes for most of a page on Frank Lunney and the abuse that has been heaped on that unfortunate, but I'm left with the feeling, "So what?" Certainly not all of Bergeron's writing is trivial, for he's capable of producing fine prose when he wants to, but he is also a master of expanding a minor point way out of proportion. I rather hope that next issue's editorial contains a bit more meat.

The single major contribution to this issue is Alva Rogers's twenty-page reminiscence of Los Angeles fandom of the Forties, "Tendrils Towers Tales." As Alva was an active participant in LASFS, the local club, in those days when LA was the most important fan center in the country, his memoirs are especially interesting. The contrast to F. Towner Laney's vitriolic history of the same period, "Ah, Sweet Idiocy!" is marked in that Alva concentrates on the happy memories he has of the period. As he says in commenting on Laney, and I think indirectly on the darker side of the LASFS, "The controversial Laney has been dealt with *ad nauseam* over the years by many fan writers, including myself. So I'm not going to write about *that* Laney any more than I have to, but about the Laney who was, for a couple of all too short years, a warm personal friend." What is most striking about this article when stood next to Laney's memoirs is that Alva writes the same kind of realistic descriptions of people and places, and uses the same anecdotal style of bringing out the feel of the period. Perhaps writing about the same subjects brings out the same style. In any case, "Tendrils Towers Tales" stands as a good evocation of a renowned age of fannish

activity.

The other material in this WARHOON, except for the lettercolumn, are regular columns. It's instructive to note that none of the old columnists who carried the sf-oriented discussions of old are present. There is another fascinating chapter in Harry Warner's biography of Walt Willis (one of the greatest fans ever to have graced the microcosm); this time Harry covers much longer periods of time in a short space than in the earlier installments. Bob Shaw contributes a surprisingly ill-informed debunking of contemporary music, but he follows it with a marvelously funny "justification" of Irishmen's alleged bad driving. Terry Carr's column, "the fannish i," is something of a policy statement on the state of fandom today, particularly the lack of adequate critical standards. He is merely saying in print what a number of others have been saying at parties and in casual conversations for some time, but Terry holds enough prestige to give his opinions on fannish matters some weight. He is, in addition, one of fandom's best humorists, and his prefacing description of a dream in which the world of television somehow merges with the fannish world is deftly critical and funny.

*The appearance of WARHOON is always densely-typed pages on blue paper, and almost the only artwork is Bergeron's own excellent work, although this time he reproduces one drawing each by Alva Rogers and Bob Shaw to illustrate their articles. There's nothing more to say about WARHOON. except "Get it!" *Highly Recommended.*

MOUNT TO THE STARS! #2; \$1.50 a copy; irregular, from HOD Publications, UTA Box 797, Arlington, Texas, 76010; 84 pp., offset; Gail Sutton, editor.

Franklin Ford, Guest Reviewer

When I slid my copy of this fanzine from its envelope, I was immediately impressed. The covers, front and rear, are full, four-color process reproductions of paintings (by George Barr and Mike Gilbert, respectively), and quite handsomely printed. The fanzine itself is offset printed in a saddle-stapled, 8½ x 11 format, and obviously expensively produced. But then I began thumbing through its pages, reading bits and pieces, and I was taken aback. The material seemed, on first sampling, totally dreadful! Unwilling to give up with such a superficial sampling, I sat down and proceeded to read every page. And by the time I was finished I was all the more confused. It would appear that what we have here is a new kind of hybrid fanzine, upon which its editor has lavished considerable money and attention, but totally lacking in standards of writing, art, or even coherency of expression.

For example, the covers: The front cover is a small masterpiece. George Barr makes up in sheer technique what he lacks in creativity of composition—most of his paintings and drawings are superbly rendered from inadequately arranged (often stiffly posed) photographs. In this painting his flaws are less obvious and his talents outstanding. A full-length portrait of a man in Edwardian dress (perhaps relevant to "Spice Trails," about which more in a moment) standing with walking stick before a heavy drape and an ancient oriental lamp, with a vivid sunset in the background, is perfectly rendered. The cloth of both clothing and drape looks as if you could touch it and *feel* its texture. The sunset looks like something out of *Arizona Highways*. And both walking stick and lamp have the lustre of old

metal. But. The painting does not hang together: it's a jumble of disparate elements, arranged artistically but unmeaningfully. Typical of Barr, I'm afraid. What he ought to be doing is covers for one of the major paperback houses—Bantam, Signet—under competent direction.

The Barr cover is a tall, thin painting, arranged on the right side of the actual cover, framed in a dark blue-green. It is quite effective. But. To the left of the painting is the title of the fanzine, and its price, and these are crudely hand-lettered in vague simulation of Olde English script. Ugly and jarring.

The back cover is a painting by Mike Gilbert. Gilbert has sold covers to *F&SF*, *Galaxy* and Ace Books, and each one of them was miles ahead of this one. The colors are pretty, but the painting was not otherwise worth the price of printing it.

The interior of MOUNT TO THE STARS boasts some fair to excellent art (including some of the best black and white work I've seen by Gilbert—scratchboard stuff which owes as much to Schoenherr as it does to his more usual influence, Jack Gaughan), middling-good layouts, and some of the most gawdawful fey devices ever unleashed in a fanzine. The worst is the page-numbering: would you believe a fanzine in which the pages are numbered in *Hebrew*? This makes the table of contents just about useless for practical reference unless you're a Talmudic scholar—which I'm not. The opening page of Gail Sutton's editorial (facing a lovely Steve Fabian full-pager) is ornately hand-lettered, and, for me, unreadable. (The second page is two-thirds devoted to a drawing which is as bad as the preceding one by Fabian was good. No consistency, do you see?)

The main item of contents is a long segment of occult fiction by someone named Markham, abstracted from a five-and-a-half-million word work of some twenty-five volumes, generically titled the *Spice Trails Histories*. The portion published here is a much-edited piece called "Much of Madness and More of Sin," and it is about what its title implies: dreary. The piece is preceded by a foreword by Thomas Munny, and is supposed to represent not only the redrafting of its author (who apparently originally committed all five and a half million words of this opus for his private amusement with no thought of publication), but the additional editing of one Alfred A. Attanasio, who says of it (in the letter column), "If I had given you the piece untouched by myself it would barely be printable." Considering the fact that the piece as published is one of the worst pieces of prose I've ever forced myself to read (although only for a few pages—I'm not being paid to read such junk), one can only wonder how much worse it was before Attanasio got his hands on it. (I'm also driven to speculate on the notion that this work of wooden Victorian dreariness is a massive put-on. But if it is, it surely represents more work than the jest is worth.)

"Spice Trails" occupies much of the physical contents of this fanzine, but it also seems to obsess the editor and her friends, in the editorial, letter column, and such contributions as the Munny foreword. It is a massive downer for the whole issue.

What for me rescued the issue was a letter written in 1967 and reprinted from elsewhere, describing the birth of a baby to a young couple in their home. It is movingly written and a joy to read. It occupies less than one page, but in very

small (though readable) type.

The tone of MOUNT TO THE STARS is not one I'm familiar with. It appears to be less a product of fandom as we (I) know it than of an offshoot fandom grown up around the hippie/university adulation for *Stranger in a Strange Land* and astrology. Although various fans are represented within its pages (the ubiquitous Harry Warner has a letter of comment in the letter column), the editor seems largely unaware of fandom, taking the small slices she has come into contact with as portions of non-fannish phenomena and integrating them with her non-fannish overview. The result is a fanzine which reads as if produced in a world located on a 90-degree angle to our own.

Fandom has grown so large (too large, really) that communications are breaking down and fanzines of this type are growing more and more common. The lines are blurring between fanzines and the general underground press—especially as the latter gets out of its city tabloid bag and more into personally expressive publications like the Bay Area CHANGES (no relation to the rock paper), which in fact has an ad in this issue of MOUNT TO THE STARS.

On the one hand I resent this: we're losing our sense of community and the closeness which once made fandom such a special place for us fans. On the other hand, I'm intrigued by the new developments in personal journalism which the melding of fandom and the counter-culture have begun to produce. More than ten years ago Robert Bloch predicted that fandom could become the next important cultural fad after the Beat Generation—we had all that Kerouac's little group had, and more—and today this is happening in a quiet fashion. What

will happen next is anyone's guess.

—Franklin H. Ford

Other Fanzines:

Last issue I managed to misplace a whole stack of recently-arrived fanzines. My apologies. I'll try to list them all this time, but if you still find that I've slighted you, well, you can write and complain. But I doubt it will change anything.

The fanzines marked with an asterisk (*) are especially recommended.

*CROSSROADS #10, Aug., 1970; 25¢ or 12/\$3; monthly or bimonthly, from Al Snider, Box 3219, Brown Station, Providence, RI 02912; 40 pp., mimeographed. Published by the Brown University SF Union.

*WHO PUT THE BOMP #2, Oct., 1970 (listed as "Oct., 1958"); 35¢ or 3/\$1; irregular, from Greg Shaw, 64 Taylow Dr., Fairfax, Calif. 94930; 36 pp., mimeographed. A rock & roll fanzine, published in an attempt to introduce the concept of "fandom" to the rock field.

CRABAPPLE #10, Summer, 1970: 1/-; irregular, from Mary Mushling Legg, 71 The Fairway, Banbury, Oxon., UNITED KINGDOM; 30 pp., mimeographed.

*WINNIE #50-1, Sept., 1970; 4/\$1, 12/\$2.50, 24/\$4.50; biweekly, from Mike Ward, Box 41, Menlo Park, Calif. 94025; 8 & 4 pp., respectively, offset. West Coast newszine.

CONGLOMERATION #4, June, 1970; 30¢ this issue, 25¢ usually or 4/\$1; irregular, from Brad Balfour, 5129 Newfield, Cincinnati, Ohio 45237; 44 pp., mimeographed.

*LOCUS #63-4, Sept., 1970; 10/\$2, 20/\$4; biweekly, from Charlie Brown & Dena Benatan, 2078 Anthony Ave., Bronx, NY 10457; 10 & 22 pp., respectively. mimeographed. A useful newszine.

STING SF #2, Summer, 1970; 3 for 12/-, 6 for 24/-; irregular, from Jane E. Hales, 2B Cheriton Road, Folkestone, Kent, ENGLAND; 32 pp., unstapled, mimeographed. "STING, we insist, is not a fanzine." Okay.

TRIPPING TANGLES #2, July, 1970; no price listed; no schedule, editor, or address, either; 16 pp., offset. Some kind of comics thing. Include your address, dammit.

RANDOM JOTTINGS #1, Sept., 1970; 40¢; irregular, from Michael Dobson, 1310 Buchanan St., Charlotte, NC 28203; 30 pp., mimeographed.

THE TOLKIEN JOURNAL #10, Nov., 1969; \$2.40 for membership & 4 issues; irregular, from Tolkien Society of America, Belknap College, Center Harbor, NH 03226; 24 pp., offset.

ORCHRIST #3 c/w TOLKIEN JOURNAL #11, Jan., 1970; \$1.25 or membership in TSA for \$2; irregular, from Richard West, 614 Langdon St., Madison, Wisc. 53703; 24 pp., offset.

MYTHLORE #5 c/w TOLKIEN JOURNAL #12, Winter, 1970; \$1 or 4/\$3; quarterly, from Glen GoodKnight, Mythopoeic Society, 6117 Woodward Ave., Maywood, Calif. 90270; 24 pp., offset. This is getting confusing, not to mention inconsistent. This and the previous two fanzines came together.

OSFAN #9, Summer, 1970; no price listed; irregular, from Douglas O. Clark, 6216 Famous Ave., St. Louis, Mo. 63139; 28 pp., mimeographed. The cover on my copy is missing. Ostensibly a newszine, published by the Ozark SF Association.

SF COMMENTARY #14, Aug., 1970; 18/\$3 Australian; monthly, from Bruce R. Gillespie, PO Box 245, Ararat, Victoria 3377, AUSTRALIA; 24 pp., mimeographed.

NO-EYED MONSTER #17-8,

Summer, 1969, & Summer, 1970; 30¢, 4/\$1; irregular, from Norman E. Masters, 720 Bald Eagle Lake Road, Ortonville, Michigan 48462; 76 & 60 half-sized pages, respectively, mimeographed.

NEXUS #2, Aug., 1970; 25¢; monthly, from Lane Lambert, Route #2, Bruce Road, Boaz, Ala. 35957; 22 pp., mimeographed.

SILVER QUILL vol. XVIII, #2, Spring, 1970; 50¢; schedule unknown, from Scott Edelstein, 1917 Lyttonville Rd., Silver Spring, Md. 20910; 64 pp., offset. A highschool literary magazine, but it was sent to me for review. It looks well done. Good photography, and a lit mag's usual overabundance of poetry.

CYNIC #1, Summer, 1970; no price listed; irregular, from A. Graham Boak, c/o 3 Ryde Lands, Nuthurst, Cranleigh, Surrey, UNITED KINGDOM; 24 pp., mimeographed.

LES SPINGE #22, July, 1970; no price listed; almost annual, from Darroll Pardoe, 15 Selkirk Court, Whitley Road, London N17 6RF, ENGLAND; 18 pp., mimeographed.

THE WSFA JOURNAL #70-1, Dec.-Jan., 1969-70, & Mar.-May, 1970; 50¢ (#70 is \$1), 3/\$1.25, 8/\$3; bimonthly, from Don Miller, 12315 Judson Rd., Wheaton, Md. 20906; 60 & 106 pp., respectively, mimeographed. The official organ of the Washington SF Association.

TOUCHSTONE #3, July, 1970; 20¢ or 6/\$1; monthly, from Bob Sourk, 3665 Fairmount, San Diego, Calif. 92105; 12 pp., offset.

FL BE DAMNED #2, July, 1970; 35¢, no subscriptions; triweekly, from Mark Feldman, PO Box 759, Woodmoor Station, Silver Spring, Md. 20901; 16 pp., offset. Expensive comics on thick paper, but the editor says the orientation will move toward sf in future issues.

Something wild and uncategorizable that came in with a covering letter, part of which I'll quote: "Review Data: No Title; No publication schedule (probably semi-annually judging by the rate of sales and increased reader interest); Price \$1; Reproduction—the best offset available; print runs are increasing from 1500 to 2000 and possibly higher; Less than 100 of #1 available; #2 unlimited (only because it will be going into a second printing); #3 is in preparation and due out in December; It will contain a minimum of 64 pages and follow much the same format as #2 . . ." The magazines are elegantly reproduced, and they seem to contain sf, comics, and underground art material. Judge it yourself.

THE BAUM BUGLE vol. 12, #3, an unnumbered issue, vol. 13, #2-3, & vol. 14, #1, Christmas, 1968, through Spring, 1970; \$1 or membership in The International Wizard of Oz Club for \$2.50; three times a year, from Fred M. Meyer, The International Wizard of Oz Club, Box 95, Kinderhook, Ill. 62345 (Club Sec.-Treas.; the editor is David L. Greene); 28, 24, 28, 28 & 24 pp., respectively, offset. Obviously, this is for Wizard of Oz fans.

SWORDS AND FANTASY #1, Sept., 1970; 15¢ or 6/90¢; bimonthly, from Adriana Gomez, 4318 San Luis St., Tampa, Fla. 33609; 12 pp.

STATIC, FLUTTER & POP #2, Summer, 1970; no price listed; irregular, from Meade Frierson III, 3705 Woodvale Rd., Birmingham, Ala. 35223. Devoted to old radio plays.

MAYBE #3, Feb.-Mar., 1970; no price listed; irregular, from Irvin Koch, Apt. 45, 614 Hill Ave. SW, Knoxville, Tn. 37902; 22 pp., mimeographed.

JULES-VERNE MAGASINET #3, Aug., 1969; no price listed; schedule unknown, from Jules Verne Magasinet (Veckans Aventyr), Lorensborgsgatan 4 A, 8 van, 217 61 Malmö, SWEDEN; 20 pp., offset. I'm not sure if this is a fanzine or a prozine, but it was sent to me. All in Swedish.

AVERNUS #2, Spring, 1970; 50¢; irregular, from Michael Dobson, 1310 Buchanan St., Charlotte, NC 28203; 100 pp., offset (?).

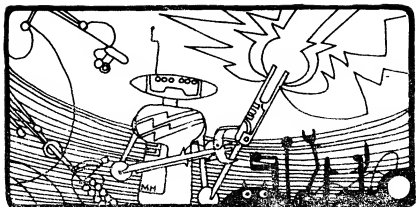
PULSE #2-3, Spring & Summer, 1970; 35¢, 4/\$1.30, 8/\$2.50; quarterly, from Allen White, 502 N. Highland Ave. NE, Atlanta, Ga. 30307; 14 & 24 pp., respectively, offset. A monsterfilm fanzine.

WEIRDBOOK #1-2, only dates are "Copyright 1968" and "Copyright 1969"; 75¢, 4/\$2, 8/\$3.75; irregular, from W. Paul Ganley, PO Box 601, Chambersburg, Pa. 17201; 32 pp. each, offset. Included with these was WEIRDBOOK SUPPLEMENT, containing letters on WEIRDBOOK and edited by Joseph Fillinger.

THE ORIFLAMME #2, May, 1970; no price listed; irregular, from David Matthews, Ivy Rd., Canton, Ga. 30114 (this is the return address, although the editor is listed as John Harllee); 36 pp., mimeographed. From a southern branch of the Society for Creative Anachronism, evidently.

EPILOGUE #1, Fall, 1970; this issue free; quarterly, from George Jennings, 7605 Sandra Dr., Little Rock, Ark. 72209; 20 pp., mimeographed. Devoted to old radio plays, and published by the erstwhile editor of a good sf fanzine.

—John D. Berry



...Or So You Say

Letters intended for publication should be typed, double-spaced, on one side of each sheet of paper, and addressed to: Or So You Say, P.O. Box 409, Falls Church, Va., 22046

Dear Mr. White,

Richard Geiss suggests in SFR41 that the prime problem with AMAZING and FANTASTIC rests in art and format; I hope he's right. If he is, with the March and April issues A&F should be back on the way to recovery. I can honestly say that in regards to art, format, and a general over-all appeal, I found both of these numbers superior to anything else on the stands. The Penderson cover was fine; more important, it was not "pulpy" nor did it give a "trashy" impression. The Gray Morrow cover for the April FANTASTIC was more than excellent, it is one of the best sf covers I've ever seen, and certainly one of Morrow's handsomest. I've long thought a Hugo overdue for Gray Morrow. Isn't it time he got one?

Also, "The Lathe of Heaven." A fascinating novel really, Mrs. LeGuin is betraying her lineage. Eastern Culture and the study of it has been a prime theme of much recent

science fiction. (*Lord of Light, The Einstein Intersection*) but why does it always have to culminate in the condemnation of Western Culture? Once the Victorian scientific romance dominated the field, and we were barraged by a flurry of novels (ie *The Moon Maid, The Goddess of Atvatabar*) in which Western man continually demonstrates his superiority over the "lesser races." Now the wheel has turned a full circle and we are assailed by Godot-like expressions and half made gestures to our own impotency to control our own destinies, and the inability of Western Man to do same as a racial group. Like the later form, I'm afraid this is becoming a bit of a cliché. While I am enjoying LeGuin's novel, I nevertheless get the irritating feeling I've read it all before. No matter really, it's still very good.

Daniel Dickinson
53 Main Mill No. 26
Plattsburgh, N.Y., 12901

I have a theory about Mrs. LeGuin's novels. I'm reminded of the way Roger Zelazny taught himself to write by setting himself varying

goals in each of his stories. My theory is that Ursula has set herself the goals of writing books in the manner of various writers she has admired. It may be sheer coincidence, but her first two novels reminded me of Marion Zimmer Bradley's better books: space-opera, but with characterization. Her third, *City of Illusions*, was very obviously van Vogtian in its complexities, while *The Left Hand of Darkness* owed much to Sturgeon. "*The Lathe of Heaven*" is, of course, Philip K. Dick—to a surprising extent. (Wizard of Earthsea defies such handy categorization, but Tolkien and the whole English tradition of fantasy spring to mind.) I don't mean to suggest that any of these novels are copies—far from it. But with each I had the feeling that Mrs. LeGuin was saying to herself, "Let's see what I could do with so&so," and perhaps analyzing the components she admired in that author's works with a view towards using them herself. If I'm right, she's far from alone in the practice. Robert Silverberg's *Time Hoppers* was written "to get Phil Dick out of my system," and several of my own novels have used van Vogt, Dick, et al. as models.—TW

Dear Mr. White,

I have been an occasional reader of *AMAZING STORIES* since 1927, and find the magazine more interesting now than it has been for quite a while. At one time I was so interested in science fiction that I went so far as to seek out a number of people who were competent in this field. Among others, I enjoyed a memorable interview with the late editor, Dr. T. O'Connor Sloane. About the same time (1938) I went to see a young bully named Sam Moskowitz, and in fact I believe that I was one of the first people ever to publish anything that he wrote.

This letter is addressed to the tirade by Mr. Moskowitz in the March *AMAZING*, following a review by Richard Lupoff in the November issue. The Moskowitz letter displays an invariance in temperament which

would be admirable if it were an adjunct of consistency, but Sam is inconsistent in that he professes a double standard. In effect he has vouchsafed, to some, certain rights of communication and emendation which in the past he has denied others, including myself.

Mr. Lupoff commendably hopes that discussion might proceed on the bases of fact and reason rather than by means of insult and canard. I doubt that Sam Moskowitz has this capability. I assume that he is without understanding except in terms of his own banality. This letter has been based on that assumption.

Claire Beck

P.O. Box 27

Lakeport, Calif. 95453

Dear Mr. White,

After reading the stories and article in your March, '71 issue of *AMAZING STORIES* (which, incidentally only one, the lead story "*The Lathe of Heaven*" got over into the "plus" side of my personal -5 to +5 rating system, and that only conditional upon the conclusion to follow in the next issue), I turned to the readers page.

I found two letters, one by a Mr. Sam Moskowitz, and a reply by a Mr. Richard A. Lupoff, concerning some sort of mutual misunderstanding of the history of science fiction writing, with particular dispute and confrontation concerning the works of Edgar Rice Burroughs.

My reactions were so strong—and unlike myself—that I analyzed them:

My reaction to these two letters was a direct steal of one of comedian Don Rickles' patented lines. "Who Cares!"

Upon examination of this crass statement, I find myself at odds with people who "live in the past." The past is "dead, buried and better off forgotten." Its value is roughly comparable to the value of a rearview mirror on a modern automobile—it is sometimes useful to know where you have been and

who is catching up to you. But I cannot help but feel it is *infinitely* more valuable to know where you are *now*, and where you are *going*, and have some semblance of an idea as to what you are going to do *when you get there!*

That, in fact, is one of the reasons I read sf. The potentials of mankind—the possible variations of future developments is limited only by man's imagination and determination, or in the retrograde, his lack of it or his stupidity: or his penchant for "living in the past!"

The Moskowitz/Lupoff letters recall to mind the Shakespearian line, "Full of sound and fury; *signifying nothing!*" I should think matters of this nature are better off handled across the editor's desk, or in some other "The-Mechanics-Of-Publishing" environment, rather than the public forum of a readers "letters-to-the-editor" page.

But, in any case, it shouldn't bother me further. I have given up on you along with *Galaxy*, *FANTASTIC* and *Fantasy & S.F.* Thank God for *Analog* and Mr. Campbell!

C.V. Blainc
Rt. 2, Box 317C
Eugene, Oregon 97401

And I'm reminded of some other choice pieces of philosophy: "He who has no past, has no present." "Facts are unimportant to a man who has made his mind up," and "Don't look back—the bastards are gaining on you!" As a matter of policy, this column is open to anyone who feels he has been unfairly (or fairly!) criticized in the pages of this magazine.—TW

Dear Ted:

Thanks for Benford and Book's engrossing article, "The Road to HAL," in the January issue of *AMAZING*. I'd just like to add an interesting observation:

If one transposes each letter of the name HAL for the letter immediately succeeding

it in the alphabet, the letters IBM appear. Coincidence?

Bill Kulyk
15407 80 Ave.
Edmonton 51, Alberta, Canada

According to Kubrick and Clarke, yes. —TW

Dear Ted:

O.K. I'll admit that "One Million Tomorrows" did sorta peel away from both "The Man Who Killed Immortals" and "Where the Subbs Go." I'm sorry I had to use the word "semi-plagiarism," but I couldn't think of a word with less punch. As it was, it looks as if I really yanked your chain anyways.

Complaint: On the March cover, there are two blotches of lighter blue in the background; is our hero (who plays no role in any of the March stories), going to be attacked by two creatures of the great beyond, or did someone handle the painting after eating some potato chips? Hugo votes: *AMAZING*-mag, "Questor"-short fiction, Kaluta-pro artist.

Davis Stever
7 Lake Road
Cochituate, Mass., 01778

It would appear our new engraver is not without faults: the blotches weren't on the painting. And yes, I guess you did "yank my chain" a bit: plagiarism is an accusation no writer takes lightly. —TW

Dear Mr. White:

Two years ago I was a fanatical science fiction fan, but not a regular reader of any of the S.F. magazines (paperbacks allowed me to be more selective). Then in the summer of 1969 I visited Israel and after a week found myself with no S.F. to read. I was ready to go crazy! Searching a bookstore in Tel Aviv I found a copy of the July '69 issue of *AMAZING*, I paid my IL 2.50 and

ran back to the bus station, just in time to make the 5:15 bus for Jerusalem. I noted with interest that AMAZING had gotten a new editor and then I settled back to read (as best I could in the dark bouncing bus) the first installment of "Up the Line." I was hooked.

Since that vacation, I have not missed a single issue of AMAZING. At first I bought them because I wanted to help keep it alive, if only for sentimental reasons ("since 1926!"). Soon, however, I was watching with interest as the magazine was reborn under your guidance. Almost every issue shows some further improvement. The March '71 issue is no exception. If the second installment of "The Lathe of Heaven" lives up to the promise of the first this novel will have been the best yet published under your editorship. And now with the appearance of a new Keith Laumer novel in FANTASTIC, I've started buying that every issue too. If the improvements in these two magazines affect others as they have me, then AMAZING and FANTASTIC are back on the road to real success.

Thank you for Berry's "The Club House" column which has made me aware of a whole new world of fandom, and thanks for all the short stories which though not phenomenal have been better. Keep up the good work, and congratulations on AMAZING's 45th anniversary.

Milton Moshe Feder
142134 Booth Memorial Ave.
Flushing, New York, 11355

Dear Ted,

I was a devoted reader of AMAZING during its golden period of 1963-1965 (it was golden to me anyway) when Cele Goldsmith and Norman Lobsenz were editors. I lost interest in the magazine during the long, dry reprint years, but picked up the March issue the other day. You've made it a good magazine again and, what's more, given it a distinctive

character once again. I only hope that you can either go back to a monthly schedule or expand each issue to 144 or 164 pages so that you can fit more stories in. I hope that you will also keep all of the features.

A word or two about your editorial: I agree that it is depressing to confront people from the "outside" who have never read any sf but think they know all about it, and smirk at insiders. It is not their ignorance so much as their smug contempt which is so irritating. On the other hand, one of sf's great strengths is its "underground" nature. If it has missed popular acclaim and acceptance, it has also missed the evils that go with them. Charles Schulz's "Peanuts" was once a funny little comic strip. Now it is a part of American culture: that is, now you find Charlie Brown on Hallmark Cards, and Snoopy advertising bread. An improvement? Ladies on tv gossip shows don't smirk at Charles Schulz but look at the price he paid. Has success done anything for Arthur C. Clarke's work? Kurt Vonnegut's?

As somebody else said, respectability is often enough a euphemism for dullness. If that's true, I'm glad sf is still unrespectable and exciting.

There are serious drawbacks to sf's position in American society. It means that the good sf publishers will be in a precarious position financially. Even worse, it means that sf-writers will be grossly underpaid, as they are. I don't know what to do to overcome these problems.

The best thing about sf is that it is so alive. Even a bad sf story is worth reading because the reader feels that the writer is trying, that he has almost gotten to a new idea, and that maybe he will get there in the next story. I can put up with a lot of bad writing for this feeling of excitement.

I'm not sure I want sf to be Important Literature, the way a Faulkner novel is Important. The day freshmen yawn at a college seminar on "Myth & Counterpoint in Zelazny" I believe I will throw away my sf

books and join a monastery.

Jeffrey Rensch
2433 Via Sonoma
Palos Verdes, Calif. 90274

The sequel to the events narrated in my March editorial was my appearance on Philadelphia's "Frank Ford Show" in November. The contrast was remarkable. Mr. Ford was everything a radio talk-show host should be and the entire evening (I was on for over an hour) was a distinct pleasure. (A touch of local color was added by a fire which swept the top stories of a residence hotel diagonally across the street that same evening. The Red Cross set up an emergency shelter in the very studio from which we were broadcasting. Mr. Ford handled it all with superb aplomb. . .)

A few last minute notes:

We inadvertently omitted the copyright credit line which belonged in our last issue in conjunction with the conclusion of Ursula K. LeGuin's "The Lathe of Heaven." The lyrics used from the Beatles "With a Little Help From My Friends" are copyright 1967 and used with permission of Northern Songs, Ltd., who reserve all rights.

The Clubhouse was pushed out of last issue for the second time running by a miscalculation on my part of the space available. I hope it is with us again this issue. I might add that the May issue—our 45th Anniversary issue—was the first in recent years in which there were absolutely no reprinted stories, something of a switch on the past three anniversary issues—1956, 1961, 1966—which were

all reprint. I had hoped to be able to celebrate with a special issue with more pages than usual, but our printing contract (which required this magazine and its sister magazine, FANTASTIC STORIES, to be printed simultaneously) made that impossible. We are now with a new printer, however, whose sample work has quite impressed us, and I hope the improvements are obvious this issue. In any case, we'll be free to celebrate our 50th anniversary—in 1976—with something genuinely unique. Stick around.

Finally, we received a note from Don Wilcox—a mainstay in these pages twenty-five years ago—in reply to David Shank's query in our November issue: "As to what has become of me—lots of interesting things. I went to Guatemala in the late '50's expecting to stay one year; was surprised by an invitation to create a bilingual scholastic magazine for Spanish language classes in the U.S.—and there I anchored for the next six years. I'm sure it was the most interesting job in Central America. There followed the setting up and editing of a bilingual weekly tabloid newspaper on the west coast—two years of this. Just as I was packing for a four-week vacation, I received a wire from New York. I turned the vacation into a one-way trip.

"For the past four years I've been editing here at the Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center. I've continued to do some free-lance fiction, using my own name and pseudonyms."

I'm glad to know you still get a chance to read AMAZING STORIES, Don—and it was good to hear from you. —Ted White

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shoulders slumped, breasts dangling, belly pushed outward. Padding across and into the shower. Well, we all have our bad days. Sound of water running. Then her head sticking into the bedroom.

She said, "By the way, the Rehab Center phoned this morning."

Macy looked up, and in the same instant Hamlin awoke and did something to his heartbeat, something transient and painful, that made him gasp and clap his hand to his breastbone.

"I said, the Rehab Center phoned—"

"I heard you." Macy coughed. "Wait a second. Hamlin acting up." He shot a furious thought downward. *Let me be. Knock it off.* The pain subsided. Macy said, "Who was it?"

"A woman doctor with an Italian name."

"Ianuzzi."

"That's the one. She wanted to know why you hadn't shown up for your therapy yesterday. After making a special early appointment and everything."

"What did you tell her?" he asked.

Hopcs suddenly soaring. His previous identity has surfaced and is trying to take him over, Dr. Ianuzzi. A terrible struggle going on inside him. Oh, is that so, Miss Moore? How unexpected. But we can handle it, of course. We'll have our mobile ego-smashing unit on the spot at seven o'clock sharp. Three quick bursts of rays from the egotron machine, beamed up from the street, and that'll be the end of Mr. Nat Hamlin for once and all, oh, yes, oh, yes. Tell Mr. Macy not to worry about a thing. Thank you for giving me the details, Miss Moore.

Lissa very far away. Dreamy. Macy

said again, more sharply, "What did you tell her?"

"I didn't tell her anything."

"What?"

"She called at a bad time for me. I don't even know why I answered. I couldn't make much sense out of what she was asking me until afterward."

"So you just hung up?"

"No, I talked, more or less. I said I didn't know much about why you missed your appointment. Or where you were at the moment." A distant shrug. "I guess I was pretty foggy."

"Jesus, Lissa, you had a chance to help me, and you blew it! You could have told her the whole story!"

She said, "Didn't you tell me that Hamlin threatened to kill you if you brought the Rehab Center into the picture?"

"That's right. But he wouldn't have known it if *you* had given them the story while I was at work. It was a perfect chance. And you blew it. You blew it."

"Sorry." But not very.

"If they phone again, will you do things right?"

"What do you want me to tell them?"

"The straight story. Hamlin coming back. And especially the part about his saying he'll stop my heart if I go near a Rehab Center. Make sure they know he means it. How I set out to go there, how he knocked me down at the Greenwich terminal. You won't forget that part of it?"

"Maybe you better call them yourself."

"I told you, I can't. Hamlin monitors everything I think or say. The moment I pick up the phone, he'll have his clutches on my—" *Jesus!* Another twinge in the chest. Clammy invisible

fingers tweaking the aorta. A cough. A gasp. A slow shivering recovery. Lissa watching, unconcerned. "There," Macy said finally. "He just did it. To let me know he's tuned in."

"What good is having them know, though, if he'll kill you if they try to help you?"

"At least they'll know. Maybe they have a remote-control way of dealing with situations like this. Maybe they can sneak up on him somehow. They've got their tricks. It can't hurt to have them realize what's happened. Provided they're aware of the risks involved for me. You won't forget that part?"

"If they call," Lissa said vaguely, "I'll try to tell them everything. I'll try." She didn't sound too sure of it.

In the night, fragmentary episodes of not-quite-nightmare, slippery bulletins issued by the psychic underground. Oddly unfrightening moments out of an unremembered past arriving on top deck for the sleeper's inspection and enlightenment. Bucolic scenes: the arrest, the arraignment, the detention center, the courthouse, the trial, the verdict, the sentence. *Keep your fucking hands off me, I told you I'd go peacefully!* Lights flashing in his eyes. A hovereye camera practically touching his nose. Viewers around the world enjoying the spectacle. See the famed doer of abominations! Watch justice triumph! Death to the enemies of chastity! A jury of twelve honest computers and true. *Swear to tell the truth the whole truth nothing but the truth. I do I do I do.* See the sobbing witnesses! Observe their haunted, vindictive faces! What memories of obscene violations blaze in their souls? *Yes, that's*

the man, he's the one! I'd know him anywhere. The courtroom silent. *Your honor, I ask permission to enter as evidence the taped record of the defendant's intrusion into the home of Maria Alicia Rodriguez on the night of—* Red lights flickering on the lawyerboard. *Objection! Objection!* Commotion. *Denied. Prosecution may proceed.* On the wall-screen the defendant appears, bent on rape. Had he but known he was performing for a camera, he would have been ever so much more stylish about it. Up onto the windowledge, hup! Pry the window open. Hands cold; this miserable winter weather. Yes. Inside. The trembling victim. And the camera descends to get a good view of the action. If they were so concerned about chastity, why did they let him consummate the rape? A good question for the victim to ask. But of course it was all taped automatically; not till later did anyone realize that the hovereye had caught the mad rapist at his trade. White thighs gleaming in the moonlight. Wiry black bush, almost blue. Push. Push. Wham! *Will the defendant please rise. Nathaniel James Hamlin you have heard the verdict of your peers. This court now declares you guilty on eleven counts of aggravated assault, fourteen counts of unsolicited carnal entry five counts of third-degree sodomy seven counts of irremediable psychic injury seventeen counts of violation of marital propriety seven counts of first-degree illicit proximity nine counts of eleven counts of sixteen counts of.* The sleeper becomes restless. Let us perhaps turn our attention to happier times. The artist at work in his splendid studio, cascades of spring sunlight pouring through the grand window. Cleverly constructing the armature for the latest

masterpiece. First comes the all-encompassing vision, you understand, the sense of the work as a wholeness, without which it is impossible to begin. This hits you like a bolt of lightning; if it comes any other way, don't trust it. Afterward it's just plonking drudgery, a lot of soldering. I wouldn't bother except that I have to. It's the first moment, the white light falling out of heaven, that makes it all worthwhile. But of course any shithead phony can say he has inspirations. Can he realize them? I can. You build the armature, see, which means you have to crap around with relays and solenoids and connectors and power-shunts and gate-nexuses and such. You calculate the atmospherics you want; a computer gives you the ionization tables, but then you have to make the corrections yourself, intuitively. You do the lighting. Then you put the skin on. Throughout the whole business you never lose sight of the initial impulse, which is, item one, a matter of form, of the actual goddamn shape of the piece, and, item two, a matter of psychological insight, of the particular movement of the spirit you mean to express. Now you know as much about my working methods as I do. You want to know more, buy one of my pieces and take it apart. The scene changes. At the gallery now, we are watching the elite of the art world scrambling to buy his 2002 output; that was the year of the phallic miniatures, they walk, they talk, they jack off, eight grand apiece, every distinguished creator is entitled to have his little black jest. Sold like hotcakes. Better than hotcakes: did you ever buy a hotcake in your life? The hotcake market is extremely depressed these days. Macy, slumbering, maybe even snoring,

makes desperate mental notes. I must remember all this when I wake up. This is my genuine past, accept no substitutes. Is Hamlin sending all this stuff up by way of making friendly overtures to me, or is he trying to torment me? In any event, more. More, he cried, give me more! So more. Look at the world through a madman's eyes. Take the hallucinogenic trip for free. Breathe in, breathe out, turn on, *tilt!* What are those streaks spanning the sky? That cockeyed rainbow, black, green, turquoise, gray, purple, white. And what colors do you see when your eyes are closed? The same. The very same. Why is there so much pressure in the groin? You can feel the pulsations, the throbbings. It's like being sixteen all over again. You want to plant it fast, you want to pump yourself dry. Insatiable. But only in strange and reluctant cunts. Why is that? Can you offer a rational explanation? Ha. Time to prowl the winter streets. A tightness in the ass, a dryness in the throat. Your own sweet wifey willing to come across for you, any time, any place, and the same is true of a myriad of others, not available Lissa, so why endanger yourself in this fashion? But danger defines the man. I climb these peaks because they're here. Do you realize, though, that you're out of your mind? Naturally I do. *Will the defendant please rise. Nathaniel James Hamlin you have heard the verdict of your peers.* There, you see the risks? You know what those bastards can do to you? Sure I know. I accept the risks. Let them do their worst. *It is the decision of this court that the identity known as Nathaniel James Hamlin having been found guilty of repeated and numerous instances of intolerably antisocial activity and having been declared an incurable and incorri-*

gible sociopathic menace by a properly constituted panel of authorities shall be withdrawn permanently from access to society and shall be at once expunged under the provisions of the Federal Social Rehabilitation Act of 2001 and that in accordance with the terms of that act the physical container as legally defined of the proscribed identity be reconstructed and returned to society at the earliest possible time. Let me have your left arm, please, Mr. Hamlin. No, this isn't a needle, it's an ultrasonic injector, you won't feel a thing. How long will it be before it takes effect? Oh, you'll sense some effects almost immediately, I'd say, as the short-term memory processes begin to break down. The left arm, now? Thank you. There. See how easy it was? We'll be back in ten hours to begin the next phase. *What is my name? Who am I? Why are they doing this to me?* Now the right arm, please, Mr. Hamlin. *Who?* Mr. Hamlin. That's you, Nathaniel Hamlin. *Oh.* The right arm, please? No, it's not a needle, it's an ultrasonic injector, just like the last one. You don't remember the last one? well, of course, I should have realized that. Here we go! *They're washing away my mind! No no no no no no no no no no no no no*

At the office the next afternoon Hamlin, who had not been heard from in any overt way for almost two full days, made another attempt at seizing the speech centers of Macy's brain. He chose his moment carefully. Late in the day; Macy trying for the tenth or twelfth time to tape his commentary for the evening new; inner tensions high. The words weren't flowing and the tones were thorny. He was covering the presumed assassination of the Croatian prime minister, a particularly

nasty incident: a gang of monadist radicals had kidnapped the man a week ago and, spiriting him away to an illegal mindpick laboratory thought to be located somewhere in the Caucasus, had subjected him to an intensive three-day personality deconstruct that had wholly obliterated his identity. His soulless shell had been picked up during the night in Istanbul and was now in Zagreb, where platoons of neurologists now were converging in the hope of summoning back his eradicated self. Scarcely any chance of success, according to a British authority on deconstruct techniques. If an identity is taken apart properly, there's no known way of reassembling it. All the king's horses and all the king's men, and so forth. A bad show. When the story had started to come off the pipe around lunchtime, Macy had instantly volunteered to handle it. He felt he had to prove to his colleagues that he did not need to be sheltered against references to deconstructs and reconstructs, rehabilitation work, and related matters. But it was proving unexpectedly difficult for him to carry out the assignment. The story was full of lumpy Croatian names that refused to cross his tongue in the right order of syllables. Moreover, he was more sensitive to the theme of the incident than he had realized; he burst into uneasy sweats at odd moments while reading his script, usually around the place where he was doing the lead-in to the statement from the London neurologist. Take it slow, the platform monitor kept calling out to him. You're pressing, Paul. Just go easy and let the words slide out. Everybody was being kind to him, again. A whole taping crew immobilized here for well over an hour while he blundered and staggered his

way through an infinity of faulty takes. Take it slow, take it slow.

This time he thought he had it. The polysyllabic names all safely taped. The intricate explication of Balkan politics handled without calamity. For the first time this afternoon, a single usable take covering ninety percent of the script. Now to clinch things: "This morning in London, we spoke with the celebrated British brain expert Varnum Skillings, who *vdrkh cmpm gzpzp vdrkh*—"

"Cut!"

"*Shqkm. Vtpkp. Smss! Grgg!*"

People rushing toward him from all sides of the studio. His skull ablaze. Eyes unfocused. Macy knew precisely what had happened, and after the first instinctive moment of terror he began to take counteroffensive action. Just as he had on Tuesday, he labored to pry Hamlin's mental grip loose. There was a complicating factor here, the public nature of his fit, the disturbed colleagues fluttering around him, asking him things, loosening his collar, otherwise distracting him. And the feeling of calamity that came over him at the realization that he had suffered this upheaval in front of everybody, exposed himself thoroughly as too sick to hold this job. Brushing aside those matters, he worked on Hamlin. The devil had bided his time, collected his strength, made his try when Macy was least prepared for it. All the same, Macy was more powerful. He had the leverage that controlling the body's main neural trunks provided. Back, you fucker! Back! Back! Let go!

Hamlin let go. Foiled again.

Macy's vision returned and he found himself staring into the agitated onyx face of Loftus. Asking him over and over what had happened, was he all

right, should they send for a doctor, an ambulance, get him a drink, a gold.

"I'll be fine," he said. Voice like corroded copper.

"You sounded so weird just then—and your face was so twisted up—"

"I said I'd be all right." Normal tone returning.

No one must know. No one.

The platform monitor, Smith, Jones, some name like that, coming up to him.

"We got a nearly perfect take, Macy. If you'd like to rest a while, and then you can do the finale for us—no problem to splice it—"

"We'll do it now," said Macy.

No one must know.

The camera crew returning to places. Confusion defused. Macy, alone under the lights, swaying a little, searched his mind for Hamlin, could not find him, decided that he really had succeeded once again in thwarting a takeover. Nevertheless, he would keep on guard. If it happened again under the cameras he'd be in trouble. No room in this organization for newsmen who throw fits at unpredictable moments.

"Roll it," said Jones or Smith.

"This morning in London." Macy said smoothly, "we spoke with the celebrated British brain expert Varnum Skillings, who gave us this assessment of the situation:"

"Cut," said Smith or Jones.

Macy smiled. Almost home free, now. The platform monitor gave the signal. Macy delivered the final line. Done. Sighs of relief. People trooping out. Low whispers, everyone no doubt talking about his creepy paroxysm.

Let them talk. I beat him down again, didn't I? He loses every time.

For once Macy thought it might be almost tolerable to have Hamlin alive within him. Hamlin was the perpetual

challenge that defined him. Every man needs a nemesis. He arises, I smite him. He arises again, I smite again. And so we go on together through the busy, happy days. He gives me texture and density. With him, I am a man with a unique affliction; I carry tragic angst. Without him I would be a shadow. And so we are comfortable with one another. Until the time when the pattern of testing, of thrust and parry, is broken. Until he conquers me. Or I him. When it comes, it will come with one quick sudden triumphant thrust, and one of us will succumb. He? I? We'll see. Home, now. A long wearying day.

Lissa wasn't there.

—to be concluded—

—Robert Silverberg

(Continued from page 90)

would not pass. The driver, next to her, looked like some distant, ominous dinosaur, anachronism out of sunken rock, a yellow monster with unfocused, hazy claws grappling the gravcar's vague controls. She stared into the shadows at her stiletto feet, but only darkness met her eye. Whips and lashes lacerated pale flesh in her troubled fetish mind. Pinned in space, the little craft seemed to hover, making no progress, draining away time as if it were excrement in a sewer. Epsilon and Sam scuffled their feet behind her, uncertain of their position or their goals. Silence made every sense tingle with acuteness.

Then, without transition, they were on the ground. The three hoods got out and stood on blinding white concrete.

"That will be one Kwattouri, *sembi*," said the driver, still a nebulous puff of yellow gas. Sal tried to shove the credit card into the driver's hand, but he gently reached out and took it him-

self. "You can't see, *sembi*. Terrestrials have a difficult time, here, *sembi*." He smiled (it looked phony to Sal), diffused back into his car, and picked up another fare.

They stood alone in the terminal shack, staring at their ship. Its proud erect phallus looked as if it were about to melt.

"Where do we go from here?" Sal asked both her companions.

"I don't know," said Sam.

"I can't see," complained Epsilon.

"I can't decide," Sal whispered. "I can't decide."

It was a border town; sometimes you get cheated in border towns.

—Pg Wyal

(Continued from page 106)

where: every grand conception can eventually be reduced to the level of a housekeeping chore. Such is the progress of civilizations.

The Lekki-Jagen system doesn't look very much like the simple models I started out with, but it *is* consistent. It requires no new physical laws, only a bit of luck and happy accident on the part of nature. Contrast Larry Niven's Ringworld, which has to be propped up with one more wonder-material every five pages. I'm pretty sure Larry started out determined to write about something really *big* and threw caution to the winds when he found that the Ringworld just couldn't be made within the limits of the known physical properties of matter.

Whether or not you like this is a matter of taste. Personally, I would much rather see the Dyson concept (for Freeman Dyson did invent the idea upon which Ringworld was built) worked out honestly, no rabbits out of the hat.

After all, sf writers have precious little chance to make their backgrounds believable. Dumping one natural law after another is no help.

—Gregory Benford

eagerly. When I got home, repared to secrecy of my room and examined the deck, however, I was disappointed. Oh, the pictures were explicit, to be sure, but they were blurry and badly printed and the girls were almost all at the least homely—and several were downright ugly. I sorted the deck and found it incomplete. I pulled out half a dozen which I liked, and sold the rest to another boy for the same sum I'd paid. I have no doubt this weeding process went on as the cards continued to change hands.

All of us had some contact with pornography when I was a boy, and of course we were all aware that the men down at the Odd Fellows Hall had "smokers" occasionally, at which "stag films" were shown. (I didn't see one until years later—after I was married, in fact.) The stuff was around, but strictly on a hand-to-hand basis. There were also flimsy books of pornographic comic strips which looked like they'd been drawn, if not printed, in the 1920's. And, later, smuggled-in Olympia Press books from France and the pirated editions from Japan.

The quality of the vast majority of this stuff was crude and the photographs and films had obviously been posed for by prostitutes who'd grown too old and ugly to ply their trade. It was junk. Its appeal lay almost exclusively in the forbidden nature of its subject matter.

And yet, as part of the underground of our cultural folklore, it flourished. Worse, for many it was their only sex education, the only source of information on a topic which has obsessed growing boys for untold generations.

It has always seemed odd to me that so many adults have been able to forget their own childhoods so easily that they can, on the one hand, regard children as aliens (a popular notion in our culture) and, on the other, condemn the very pornography in which they revelled as adolescents without betraying any awareness of their own hypocrisy.

"It didn't hurt *me*," they say, with a smug smile, "but then, I knew how to handle it." (—with their left hands—) "I certainly don't like to see *innocent children* exposed to that sort of trash, though."

"That sort of trash" is out in the open today, and it is of inestimably better quality than the trash we enjoyed when I was a kid. Why, the girls are actually attractive. And Olympia Press, for one, insists on certain literary standards.

Because, in an open competitive market, the good drives out the bad. Pretty girls are more exciting than ugly ones. A novel populated with believable characters is easier to identify with than one built of cardboard.

And, somewhere along the line, a boundary is crossed. The boundary between pornography and literature, between pornography and art. At some point it ceases to be "cheap trash," and becomes "erotic realism." And a writer of the stature of Norman Mailer can write, despite his own sexual fascism, a "The Time of Her Time."

I doubt very much the present "porno boom" will last many years more. Why should it? Those who have been seeking the stuff out are, sooner or later, going to become glutted with it. Already, it is getting harder to move.

It's hypocritical to deny *all* curiosity about or interest in pornography—no matter how Positive your Mental Attitude—but anyone's curiosity is finite. One can look at pictures—full color, good focus—of coupling genitals only so many times before boredom sets in. There is nothing intrinsically exciting in the scene—the excitement lies in one's imagination, and in the exposure of a forbidden sight. It wears off. I imagine the easiest way to end the boom in pornography would be to publish it everywhere—our magazines, our newspapers, even to show it on tv—for a month. By the end of that time, we would all heave a sigh of relief to be done with it.

The censors—Positive Mental Attitudes and all—would probably flip at the sugges-

tion, and its eventuality is too remote to even speculate upon. Perhaps, because the censors treasure their own sense of forbiddenness and will not give it up.

Still, if pornography is never blanketed across our mass media, its very presence—its availability at the corner candy store, in fact—has made it possible for responsible artists and writers to advance several steps over the senseless taboos that used to bind them. Sexuality is a bedrock part of our human nature, and how much easier to simply accept it as such in our novels than to pretend to ignore it, to attempt to write around it. Man has several drives, but Freud was quite correct in identifying the sexual drive as a (but not *the*) primary one. (Perhaps Freud was misled by the nature of the Victorian culture, in which sex was so taboo a subject that it obsessed nearly everyone . . .)

In science fiction we've witnessed a very slow liberation of the medium which has required some two decades to reach its goals. It was, after all, only 1952 when Philip Jose Farmer's "The Lovers" was published in *Startling Stories* as a "taboo-breaker." Today that novella seems not at all shocking (and, in truth, it drew few complaints even then), but the idea of a story which revolved around the act of sex and its biological complications seemed revolutionary then in an era when nearly all four-letter words were considered "unprintable," despite their common use in ordinary conversation.

We inherited the strictures of the pulps. Pulp were thought "trashy" by literary snobs, but, with rare exceptions, the heroes and heroines of those bygone days thought only the most pure of thoughts, and their behavior towards one another was exemplary.

For years dominated by these taboos, our field has lagged far behind the "main-

stream"—not necessarily in sensationalism so much as in honest probing of relationships. Now, happily, we are catching up.

There is no reason why a science fiction story should contain brilliant and thoughtful scientific extrapolations—and be peopled by cardboard cutouts. Likewise, while I would hope never to see sf fall into a reactive rut of bed-happy protagonists, sex has a valid place in many sf stories, and should not be denied that place, nor its position in overall character development.

In recent months we have heard a great deal about the "new Heinlein novel," for which Heinlein supposedly did research into Krafft-Ebbing. I won't comment on the novel—my respect for the author Heinlein was for thirty years will not allow me to read a work of his which has garnered nothing but unfavorable reports—but certainly the *fact* of this novel, irrespective of its quality, signals the culmination of the change which had only begun in 1952.

Beginning in this issue, we are serializing Robert Silverberg's "The Second Trip." It is a powerful novel in nearly every respect, not the least of which is its language. I have not substituted euphemisms, nor softened that language for the novel's appearance here, for obvious reasons. The language is honest, and it is necessary. Silverberg has taken an idea, a situation, which is certainly not new to science fiction, but he has invested it with real and moving human beings. He has extended it. He has written a *novel*. It is, I need not say, a good novel. It is an honest exploration of a science fiction theme by a science fiction author, and requires no apologies to the "mainstream."

That, if anything, is what the decade-long "revolution" in sf during the sixties is really all about. And we're proud to publish it here, in *AMAZING STORIES*, as part of our "revolution."

—Ted White



ALL IN COLOR FOR A DIME

Edited by
DICK LUPOFF & DON THOMPSON

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